The Little Old Lady

by

LYNN · HAROLD · HOUGH

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/ladyoldlady0000lynn

Mother ——

December 25, 1921.

A book by Dr. Hough, of whom you have often heard me speak, writing of his Mother. He is a middle-aged, unmarried man, at present Pastor of one of our large churches in Detroit.

Robert Clarke.

OTHER BOOKS BY THIS AUTHOR

THE MEN OF THE GOSPELS
16mo. Net, 50 cents

THE LURE OF BOOKS
16mo. Net, 25 cents

ATHANASIUS: THE HERO
12mo. Net, 50 cents

THE THEOLOGY OF A PREACHER
12mo. Net, $1.00

THE QUEST FOR WONDER
12mo. Net, $1.00

IN THE VALLEY OF DECISION
16mo. Net, 50 cents

THE MAN OF POWER
16mo. Net, 75 cents

The Little Old Lady

BY
LYNN HAROLD HOUGH

THE ABINGDON PRESS
NEW YORK CINCINNATI

Copyright, 1917, by
LYNN HAROLD HOUGH

First Edition Printed March, 1917
Reprinted April, 1918

TO MY FRIEND
DAN B. BRUMMITT
WITHOUT WHOSE ENCOURAGEMENT THESE
STORIES WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN WRITTEN

CONTENTS

		PAGE
I.	A Bundle of Books	9
II.	By the Library Fire	18
III.	The Undeserving Poor	28
IV.	The Seven Stars	39
V.	In the Middle of the Night	50
VI.	The Eclipse of Elizabeth Dalrymple	60
VII.	She Did Not Understand	74
VIII.	Bleed Awhile; Then Fight Again	84
IX.	When Skies Were Gray	93
X.	Burning but Not Consumed	100
XI.	At the Polo Grounds	112
XII.	The Other Country	124

I

A BUNDLE OF BOOKS

THE little old lady sat rather primly in her easy chair. Her face with its sharp, fine lines, her beautiful white hair, her eyes which could yet flash with a vital luster, and the quiet charm of her gown, made her an arresting figure. She clearly had come out of another age into this. But she did not simply suggest lavender and old lace. She seemed very much at home in the world of to-day. There was a shrewd alertness about her which suggested that not much of significance escaped her scrutiny. And withal there was a sympathetic kindliness in her expression which made you feel at once that she was the sort of person to be a human shelter in a time of storm.

I flung myself in the chair beside her, while she looked up inquiringly. "No, don't ask me a single question," I began. "You are always picking up the reins and setting me going on a conversational trot when I come to hear you talk. To-day I'm going to have my way. I

will be all ears and you are to be"—here I broke off a little disconcerted by the direction in which my figure was carrying me.

"All tongue," she laughingly completed my sentence, with a sort of gay contagion in her merriment. "And what shall I talk about?"

"Talk about books," I replied. "Tell me about your twelve-foot shelf. Here you are reading and thinking and brooding over great books for years and then hiding your light under a bushel. Now let it shine on me."

The little old lady sat very still for a moment. She was always making all of us tell her of our interests, of our successes and our failures, of our likes and dislikes. She seemed to enjoy being a background for her friends' experiences. It was a little hard for her to turn her mind inward and talk about her own likes and dislikes even in the world of books. But her eyes brightened in a moment and she began.

"I haven't any twelve-foot shelf at all. And I haven't any books. I just have friends who speak through the printed page. It's the friends I care about, and when I'm alone I don't just feel that I'm sitting among books, but that I'm sitting among people. I've never been a col-

lector of books and I don't believe I can call myself a collector of ideas. I go to books to get acquainted with people. And a bundle of books is really a company of friends."

Here I broke in for a moment, despite the assertion I had made that she was to do the talking. "What an expert in humanity you are! You simply keep people hovering about you, and you even make your library human."

But the alert look was in her eye again. "No, I don't make my library human. I simply refuse to admit any books which are not alive. I keep a sign over the door, 'This is not a mausoleum. No literary corpse admitted here.' "

She looked up at the well-filled shelves all about her and began to nod her head in a way which suggested judicial estimate and a final verdict. "Yes," she said, while her eyes rested lovingly on volume after volume, "you are all alive—every one of you."

I had absent-mindedly picked up a volume from the table. It was J. A. Spender's The Comments of Bagshot. The little old lady put out her hand for it.

"If I were making a bundle of books to carry off to a desert island—or a pig-skin li-

brary to take to Africa," she said, "I think Bagshot would have to go along. You see, he is the sort of person who fairly tantalizes you into thinking. He has an individual mind, and he knows how to say things so that you sit right up to listen. Take this for example," and she read: 'The true bore is seldom stupid, and often very clever; but a diet of pearls is extremely boring to the swine.' "

She waited a moment to be sure that I had taken in Bagshot's clever saying. Then she went on: "Do you know, there came to me like a flash when I read that, the memory of conversations where I had been dreadfully bored, but every sentence of which would have proved full of stimulus and enjoyment for people of another temperament and of other interests. You can choose a book which fits your mood and you can choose a book which fits your interest. With people you have exactly the opposite situation. You must learn to fit their mood and respond to their interests."

"And how did you learn to do that?" I interrupted. "For you are always in my mood when I come to see you, and the thing that interests me seems about the most interesting thing in the world to you."

"I'm afraid you are a sly flatterer," said the little old lady, "but if there's any truth in what you say, there are two causes for it. One is that I have a great Friend in whose presence no human being ever felt lonely, and he has taught me many things. The other is that my book friends have taught me that nothing which causes a human heart to beat faster or an eye to kindle is uninteresting if you really understand it."

She picked up a well-worn copy of Browning's poems as she said: "Browning, you know, was always showing us that every man is a fascinating study if you only have the key to the right room in his soul. I am not sure but it was he who made me see that life is a great game where all the people are locks and I am to find the right keys. It's a game you never tire of. There's always a thrill of delight when you find the key which fits the lock."

The little old lady reached toward some books which had evidently recently come to her. One was Edward Steiner's From Alien to Citizen. She opened it and pointed to one of the pictures of Mr. Steiner which it contains.

"Here is a man who deserves the blessing Abou Ben Adhem received," she declared;

"such zestful, hearty, comradely love for his fellow men as this book does breathe forth! It's a regular course in humanity."

She paused and her face was grave with a certain regretful thought for a moment. "There was a time," she said, quietly, "when the very name 'immigrant' brought up unpleasant suggestions in my mind. I thought of him as just a suit of clothes—and not a very respectable suit of clothes—with a foreigner inside. Then came Jacob Riis with The Making of an American, and Mary Antin with The Promised Land, and I was converted. Now comes Edward Steiner with From Alien to Citizen, and I believe"—this with a deliciously quizzical look in her eyes—"that I am going on unto perfection in my feelings about the immigrant. Of course the human touch is the final matter. The boy of Slavic antecedents who left the house just as you came in has taught me more than all the books. You ought to see his eyes flash as he pronounces the word 'America.' It's like watching Aphrodite born from the sea foam. The Goddess of Liberty seems to leap from his eyes as he speaks. You know that the future is safe if you can keep that flash in American eyes."

By this time I was leaning back in my chair

listening in quiet delight. The little old lady was in one of her really revealing moods, and I knew that there was more to come. A volume of poems by Alfred Noyes was near her on the table and it caught her eyes as she went on: "My boy from the east of Europe has taught me many things. Brush away surface differences and the deep common human things come marching out of his life. You understand them and you feel them, and so you understand him. This afternoon I read to him Alfred Noyes' 'Barrel Organ.' I had explained some things before I read the poem and he caught every bit of it. He fairly kept time to its music and his mind kept time to its thought. Noyes helps me to feel that life may still be set to a musical accompaniment and that the music need not be a somber minor. I like the robust poetry, providing there is moral and spiritual robustness as well as vigor of phrase. I have kept saying over and over again to myself some lines of one of the new and really inspired poets:

"The soul can split the sky in two, and let the face of God
shine through,
But East and West will pierce the heart, that cannot keep
them pressed apart.
And he whose soul is flat—the sky
Will cave in on him by and by."

"Now, don't you wish you had written that?" she inquired, triumphantly, after quoting the words with infinite zest.

"Yes, because if I had written that I could get some other things said which I do not know how to express," I replied.

There was a flash of quick approval in her eye, but she went on: "I was speaking of Alfred Noyes when those lines came dashing into my mind and they had to come out. If you will really master 'The Flower of Old Japan' and 'The Forest of Wild Thyme,' you'll know some things almost too deep for words. It is a wise man who can bring bright solid pearls from fairyland."

On a shelf near to the chair in which the little old lady sat I noticed The Gentle Reader, Among Friends, and Humanly Speaking, by that quiet, observant essayist, Samuel Crothers. She followed my eyes, and her own brightened as they fell upon the books.

"Really, I hardly know how to tell you the way I feel about Samuel Crothers. Since the time when I first read one of his essays in the Atlantic I have felt that I had another friend, a man of that whimsical, quiet gayety which adds so much to the zest of life. But since the

publication of Humanly Speaking I think of Crothers as a man of genuine leadership. He says some words which it is most important to have Americans hear and heed. And I myself can never forget or long ignore his new commandment, 'Thou shalt not sulk.' "

Suddenly remembering an engagement, I pulled out my watch, and gave a little whistle of surprise—I was very much at home with the little old lady and I had learned long ago how she liked these unconventional expressions of a man's feeling. There was only time to reach my appointment. So I reached for my hat. It was quite like the little old lady to add as her last word in the midst of her farewells:

"I found the most remarkably human bit which I had never noticed before when I was reading Jeremiah the other day. I do like *human* prophets."

So I went away with the phrase "human prophet" ringing in my ear. It seemed both a challenge and a command. Dear little old lady! Does she ever dream how much she has influenced us all?

II

BY THE LIBRARY FIRE

THERE was a quiet enticing little alcove in one corner of the library. Here I threw myself down in an easy chair.

The Christmas season was approaching and there had been an unusual pressure of work. In another part of the room a wood fire crackled, but I kept to my favorite alcove in spite of its invitation. A book was lying open on a little table near me. I picked it up and read the title, The Romance of Preaching, by Charles Silvester Horne. My eyes fell on a marked sentence, and I read, "I might have called the subject of these lectures, in which I hope to review some of the more notable preaching exploits of history, 'Keeping the Soul of the World Alive.' I have preferred to call it The Romance of Preaching." This phrase, "Keeping the soul alive," had arrested the attention of the little old lady and she had marked it in her careful, individual way. I sat dreaming, with the book

before me, seeing again the form of that knight of non-conformity, Silvester Horne, hearing his summoning voice, and calling to mind that London Mission where his name is such a sacred memory.

But my meditations were suddenly interrupted. There was the sharp, decisive movement of young feet, and the voices of Tom and Charley and Mary seemed mingled in enthusiastic talk as with the little old lady they entered the library. It was good to see them so, youth and age in the heartiest and most understanding comradeship. Tom placed a comfortable chair in front of the library fire and soon the three children were gathered about their grandmother, still talking eagerly. It was a very pleasant picture, and from my alcove I looked upon it with quiet enjoyment.

In a momentary lull in the talk Mary looked up quickly. "Now, grandmother, it's time for the stories," she said.

"Yes! Yes!" chimed in the others. "You know you promised us two Christmas stories, which really belonged together and made one story, and we were to think about them and find out just what they meant."

The three were hovering over her eagerly now, and a tiny delicate flush mounted the cheek of the little old lady as she looked upon their buoyant, healthful, bright faces.

"Well, if I promised, the stories must be told," she replied, and Tom and Charley and Mary, with half-articulate sounds of delight, placed themselves in favorite positions where they could watch every expression on the face of their grandmother, and could even see the flash in her eyes. Tom used to say, "You don't really hear one of grandmother's stories unless you watch her eyes."

"I'll tell you first," the little old lady began, "about the Christmas songs which got lost." She put her hand on Charley's curly head and looked into his dreamy, thoughtful eyes as she went on.

"Every Christmas the good God sends a great number of Christmas songs to the world. They are the strangest little creatures you can imagine. They have no bodies, or arms, or legs. They just have heads, bright, merry faces with shining eyes, and wings—"

Tom had been visiting an art gallery with his teacher, and here he broke in: "They're just the opposite of the Winged Victory.

It has wings without a head, and they have heads and wings and nothing else."

The little old lady smiled with appreciation at this interruption. She was pleased with every indication that the children were remembering what they had seen, and thinking and comparing.

"That's quite right, Tom," she said. "But their wings are very much like those of the Winged Victory. Only they are all very small. Such little wings, and such very tiny heads."

"And what do they do?" asked Mary, with an alert little look of which we were all very fond. She wanted the story to go on.

"What do the Christmas songs do?" repeated the little old lady. "Why, they come straight to the world. The good God sends as many songs as there are people in the world. And if the people will let them in, they go right into their hearts and sing there. The most wonderful music in the world is made by the Christmas songs when they sing in people's hearts. That's what makes Christmas such a glad time to so many people. When you go out on the street on Christmas day and look into the people's faces you can tell

whether the Christmas song has been sung for them. Wherever you see a bright, shining face you can know that a Christmas song was welcomed in another heart."

The children were quite accustomed to the little old lady's fanciful stories, and their minds followed them readily. They were very quiet for a moment thinking, and then she went on:

"Once there was a little village of a thousand people. And every one of them was just as selfish as selfish could be. When Christmas time came the good God sent a thousand songs to the village, with their merry faces and shining eyes and bright wings. And not a person in the village would make a place in his heart for one of the Christmas songs. All the people were busy with selfish thoughts, and some were bent on cruel deeds, and so they could give no welcome to the little creatures who had come to sing to them. And the Christmas songs flew about the village, O, so unhappy and full of sorrow—because no one would give them a welcome. Then, small as they were, they began to shrink and grow smaller and smaller, until at last you could hardly see them at all. And then

a cold, swift wind came along and blew them away—no one ever knew where. And the thousand selfish people in the village went on their hard, selfish way. But they had no Christmas music in their hearts. They were not happy, and as time went on their faces grew black and sullen. And people used to go out of their way to avoid that village where there was no place in any heart for a Christmas song."

The wood sputtered and blazed in the fireplace, and the children looked into it with sober eyes. It was Tom who spoke first, looking up at his grandmother.

"I suppose you wouldn't have a real Christmas, however many presents you got," he said, "if you kept Christmas shut out of your heart."

"That's just it," cried the little old lady, "and it surely didn't take you long to find out what the story meant," she added, patting him on the shoulder with her delicate hand in whose very touch we had all found no end of meaning.

There was a moment more of quiet, and then Mary, who never did like to wait, rose from her chair, took a turn in the room, and

then flinging herself on a rug near her grandmother, looked up expectantly. A twinkle came into the eyes of the little old lady.

"Now you want the other story, don't you?" said she.

Six eager eyes were fixed upon her, and three voices called impatiently for the second story. I sometimes wondered that the gentle, fragile woman was not worn out by these boisterous, eager children. They were so constantly with her. And whether it was a story or a new game she invented for them, they were back again clamoring for more. She did not seem at all weary, however, as with a little movement of preparation as if settling herself for an interesting time she began.

"There was a little boy who had to go to bed every night at seven o'clock—"

"That must have been Charley," laughed Tom.

"Well, you needn't talk," said Charley, "you used to have to go to bed at seven o'clock too."

But the little old lady was not to be diverted from her story.

"This little boy used to have the queerest

and most wonderful dreams. He would tell them to his mother, and sometimes she would laugh at them, and sometimes a bright little tear would glisten in her eyes. She often wondered how he came to have these dreams, and what thoughts in his brain kept playing about in his mind after he had gone to sleep, to make them. Well, the evening of Christmas this little boy asked to be allowed to stay out of bed just as long as he wanted to, and he was told that he might do it for just that one night. His father put him in a big Morris chair with all his toys and presents about him, and he sat looking at the Christmas tree, all shining with the lights of a hundred little candles. It was great fun, and for a long time he never thought of sleep. At last he noticed one candle on the tree go out, and then another, and another, and then his eyelids began to droop and—"

"He went sound asleep," interrupted Tom, giving Charley a little push with his thumb. "Just what you'd do, old boy, if you tried to stay up long after seven o'clock."

Charley was too much interested in the story to resent this side attack, and the little old lady went on.

"Well, he did go right to sleep in his chair. But the queer thing was that he began to dream. And the dream went on from right where he was. On the Christmas tree the candles were burning low, and he dreamed that another went out, and another and another, until at last only one was burning at the top of the tree, but it was burning very brightly, as if it could burn on and on. And then a wonderful thing happened. A beautiful white angel with snowy wings came right into the room and picked the candle off the tree—"

"Say, I'd like to have had that dream," cried Tom, his eyes bright with interest.

"The angel took the candle and brought it right over to the little boy and said, 'Take this candle, and put it in your heart, and keep it burning there forever.'

"But just at that moment a hand was put on the little boy's shoulder, and the big, strong voice of his father cried out: 'What, sound asleep! Well, it's bedtime now, sure enough,' and he was picked up and carried away to bed in his father's arms. As they went he muttered, sleepily, 'Don't let the angel go away, and be sure and keep the candle burn-

ing.' And by this time he was sound asleep again, and the sleep was so deep that he didn't dream any more."

There was only a little time of silence, when Mary cried out, "I know what it means. The candle and the Christmas song are the same thing."

Mary sometimes had flashes of understanding and insight which fairly startled us. One of them came to her now. She looked up at her grandmother saying:

"I guess you have the Christmas song in your heart and the candle burning there, too, or you could never have thought of the stories."

Over in my alcove I was repeating to myself the words of Matthew Arnold:

> "Quench then the altar fires of your old gods,
> Quench not the fire within."

And once more my eyes fell on the words marked in Silvester Horne's book, "Keeping the soul alive."

"That's what she is doing for these children," I said, softly, and slipped quietly out of the room.

III

THE UNDESERVING POOR

IT was a bitterly cold Saturday in midwinter. The little old lady was sitting by a cheerful fire. There was an unusual frown on her face as she read from a paper. She threw the sheet down a bit impatiently, saying: "Here's a glowing tribute to a philanthropist who has done much for the 'deserving poor.' I'd like to know what he's done for the undeserving poor. They are the real problem. And how they do need help!"

The daughter of the little old lady smiled as she rose to leave the room.

"Well, we will put you over against that staid and proper philanthropist, as the friend of the unworthy. I think sometimes I'd like to put a sign above your door, with the inscription, 'Whoever doesn't deserve a friend is welcome here.' "

The eyes of the little old lady grew suddenly serious.

"No," she said, "that signboard doesn't belong to me. But it does belong to my Master.

And I'd like to believe that I've learned from him," she added, wistfully, "to be a friend to the other publicans and sinners."

"Other publicans and sinners, indeed!" cried her daughter, as she stooped to kiss the little old lady, with suspicious moisture in her eyes. "You wonderful mother, I won't have you calling yourself names. But there, I must go now—"

At this moment the doorbell rang. A window looking out of the living room commanded a good view of the piazza, where a poorly clad man stood shivering before the door.

"Here he is!" cried the daughter. "Talk about the undeserving poor and he appears. I've never seen him before. But one glance tells the story. The express train by which that man traveled to poverty was the 'Drink Overland.' I'll leave him to his fate. But I know what kind of fate it will be."

She passed quickly from the room, just as a servant appeared.

"A man at the door says he would like to see you, Mrs. Morley."

"Send him right in," said the little old lady, seating herself a thought more firmly in her chair.

It was a very innocent and unsuspicious-looking person, however, whom the man, with marks of dissipation on his face and of poverty on his clothes, faced a few minutes later. She had risen and greeted him in a voice of quiet friendliness. Then she motioned him to a chair near her own, saying,

"Your name is—?"

"James Bordon," replied the man, evidently more engaged for the moment with the physical comfort of being shut in from the cold than with the question he was answering. He was rather tall, and under the lines of dissipation on his face there were unmistakable marks of breeding. Despite his frayed and worn clothing, he took his chair with a certain easy bearing, which told of other days, and of a life where even small details of movement were made to express gentle and gracious ways of living.

"You wished to see me, Mr. Bordon?" inquired the little old lady, as he made no movement to speak.

The man started, and with a rueful, half apologetic smile said, "You must pardon me; just the comfort of this room made me forget myself—and my errand."

He scanned the little old lady's face closely. The shrewd, alert, wily look in his eye did not escape her.

"The fact of the matter is, Mrs. Morley" (he had found her name in a telephone book), "the fact of the matter is I'm in trouble. I've no possible claim on you, except that of a man who is down and out." He had leaned toward her with a movement and tone which had some subtle appeal in them.

"It's all my own fault," he went on. "I've been the kind of speculator the moralists hold up to high scorn. I've invested friends and manhood as well as money in drink—and now I have nothing left except hunger—and a wife who is hungry too."

Did the little old lady imagine that he paused a moment while his eye searched hers, to see the effect of his announcement about his wife?

She had scarcely time to make up her mind, as he continued: "Yes, there is something else. I am an inventor. It's a sure thing, my invention, and my wife will be all right, and I'll have a chance to fight my fight, if we can just be helped over the present predicament. Here's a letter which came from my wife to-day."

He pulled from his pocket a letter—without any envelope, the little old lady noticed. "She is five hundred miles from here, and waiting for news of the invention, and while she waits, the wolf isn't merely at the door. It's running madly all through the house."

Looking very innocent and very kindly still, the little old lady rang for a servant.

"Will you serve tea now," she said, "and bring some hot coffee and chicken sandwiches with the tea."

The man was taken aback by Mrs. Morley's sudden action. He fell silent. Then he became subtly aware that the little old lady wanted him to be silent, and, master of adroit conversation as he usually was, he was not able to find anything to say. He moved uneasily in his chair, but nothing was said until the servant appeared, conveying a tray upon which was an unusually beautiful silver service, with tea and coffee, sandwiches and cake.

As if he had been an honored guest, the little old lady poured out the steaming coffee. "You take cream, and how many lumps of sugar?" she said.

Easily falling into her mood—being socially adjustable was his forte—the man replied,

"Yes, two, please," and reached forth his hand.

There was the look of a very hungry man in his eye, but he ate with a certain quiet deliberation.

"A thoroughbred as to manners, however weak and bad he is," was the thought which flashed through the mind of his hostess. She was a master in her own way at the creating of atmospheres, and a gentle, genial serenity seemed all about the man, as he continued eating while she daintily drank her tea.

In the most natural way in the world she prolonged her tiny cup and her thin sandwich until she made it seem almost a favor for him to go on eating to keep her company. He realized that he had eaten heartily, and more than one cup of exhilarating coffee had been handed to him, when the bell was rung and the servant carried away the tray, the silver service, and the empty dishes.

A new look came into the eyes of the little old lady. The man realized that he had not fathomed her at all. She leaned toward him.

"Now," she said with a strange combination of friendliness and sternness, "I must tell you that I don't believe a word you say—except

about the drinking. There is no invention and there is no wife!"

The man was completely nonplussed. For the moment his wits forsook him. Perhaps protestations would move this old lady with the strangely penetrating eyes. He rose dramatically. "I assure you, madam," he cried, attempting to strike an attitude, "that every word which I have told you is entirely true."

He never knew how it happened, but the smooth hardwood floor seemed to move beneath his unaccustomed feet, and he slipped and fell.

There was no screen in front of the fire, and as he fell his arm went straight into the fireplace. Wildly clutching for something to hold, he suddenly drew back his hand, realizing that his sleeve was in the fire. But it was too late. A thread of fire wound along his arm. It became a blaze, and in a moment his coat was burning.

The little old lady had risen.

"Roll over to the right," she cried. She seized a beautiful rug which lay near her, and flung it over the man, wrapping it about him. She beat upon it with her hands, and with her delicate fingers actually smothered some fire which crept beyond the rug.

In a moment it was all over. The fire was out and the man was safe. When he rose he realized, to his surprise, that he was not seriously burned. But the shabby and ragged overcoat he had worn was ruined. The coat beneath showed the effects of the accident. Yet the man himself was not burned enough to involve any serious consequences.

When all this became clear to him, he turned to the little old lady. She was standing with her hands behind her and her lips compressed.

"You're quite right," he said, brokenly. "There's no invention and there's no wife. I have no right to ask your pardon, and I have no right to thank you. If you'll allow me, I think I will go." There was a dull misery in his eye as he spoke.

"Wait a moment," said the little old lady. She pointed to a purse lying on the table. "Will you be kind enough to open that for me? I fear I cannot use my hands just now."

"What, your hands are burned!" said the man, bitterly, making no movement toward the purse.

"It's of no consequence. Don't be alarmed," said she, "but please open the purse for me."

Something in her eye caused him to obey at

once. There were a number of bills in the purse.

"Now, will you take five dollars, please?" said the little old lady; "that will cover your needs until Monday. And on Monday morning I want you to come and see me. And will you take my card—there in the side case—and present it at Smith and Layton's clothing store. Before you reach the store I will have arrangements made, and they will supply you with an outfit to take the place of the one which my deceptive floor has ruined. Now I think I must say good afternoon."

There was something so decisive in her tones and bearing that the man at once took the card and departed. He did not see the little old lady totter as she rang for a servant. But he was accustomed to observe closely, and he feared the very thing had happened which he did not see.

Saturday night a wonderful box of flowers came from the leading florist of the city, addressed to Mrs. Morley. Sunday morning a comfortably clad man inquired at the door as to Mrs. Morley's condition, but refused to give his name.

Monday morning the same man appeared, and

giving the name of James Bordon, was, according to the old lady's directions, ushered into the beautiful room where she was still confined to her bed. He was all solicitude and shame as he looked at the bandaged hands, but the little old lady at once caught a new look in his eye.

"Tell me," she said, gently, "how you have gotten through these cold nights. I'm afraid you didn't use very wisely the money I gave you."

"Do you know," said the man, "the moment I left the house with five dollars I wanted to drink. I wanted it so badly that I felt as if I must have it. Then when I was fairly ready to go to a saloon, I remembered your burned hands, and I just couldn't. And I couldn't use the money for myself.

"I went to the clothing store and was fitted out, then went to a florist's and—yes, I spent it all for flowers to send to you. Something inside seemed to snap as I did it, and something else seemed to get a grip. I started out, and if you'll believe it, Saturday afternoon as it was, I found a bit of honest work to do, and so I've been self-supporting over Sunday.

"And," here his eyes kindled, "I'm to go right back from here to work. It's work I once

would have despised. The queer thing about it is that I seem to be willing to do it, and everything seems changed, just because of your burned hands."

A strong, clear light was in his eye. He talked very frankly now of his past life, and without disguise told the little old lady things no other ear had ever heard. Then he talked of the future, and his face set in hard, strong lines as he spoke. It was not a long call, for his work was waiting.

When he rose to go the little old lady said, "I'm sorry I can't shake hands with you, but—I believe every word you say."

IV

THE SEVEN STARS

MAX NEWTON wrote his first novel, The Hilltop, at the age of twenty-three. It was praised by the critics and ignored by the public. Max had a trick of haunting phrases which had won him much distinction at college. The plot of his book was clever. The construction was extremely good for a first attempt. The story really moved in a quiet way, and there was a half impalpable charm about the style which caught the attention of a number of men sensitive to delicate effects. But the general public simply passed the book by.

"It was too good to fail and not good enough to succeed," said the head of the sales department to the publisher.

"Too subtle for the crowd and not involved enough for the highbrows," said a clever observer of literary happenings whom Max Newton knew.

He was talking it over with the little old

lady one afternoon. We all had a way of sharing every experience with her. She knew Max very well, and when he said, "Now, Mrs. Morley, won't you tell me what is the matter with it?" her reply was ready. There was a flash in her eye which mingled honest affection and critical appraisal.

"Well, Max," she said, "if you really want to know, I think I can tell you. It's clever rather than human." She waited a moment while he knitted his brows in thought. Then she continued: "The fact of the matter is, Max, that your ideas have outrun your experiences, and your emotions have outrun your human contacts, and so with all the cleverness, and charm, and the real distinction to be found in the book, it doesn't strike a note which is compellingly authentic. It talks about life very brilliantly, but it doesn't come out of life."

"And what am I to do about it?" asked Max.

"You'll have to live," was the quick reply of the little old lady.

Max Newton walked away pondering the words of his friend. He thought much about them, and even read The Hilltop through with them in his mind. Perhaps this very

conversation had much to do with his going to New York city that fall. His gift of quick, racy, expressive writing quickly secured for him a position with a great daily, and he applied himself diligently to the long and tedious apprenticeship which this particular organ of public opinion requires of its reporters.

Five years passed by. We all knew that Max Newton was doing well. But he seemed quite engrossed with life in New York and with his work on the paper. No new book was published. We were wondering if he had decided to abandon a literary career, when The Seven Stars suddenly appeared. It cannot be denied that the book gave us all a decided jolt. It was not that it lacked energy and power. Elizabeth Dalrymple, who had a way of sizing up people and situations and books in a sentence, declared that it had nothing but energy, "energy gone mad." It was a success from the very moment of its publication. At the end of four months a hundred thousand copies had sold, and before the end of the year it had a place near the head of the list of best sellers. I bought it just before taking a railroad journey and I confess that it gave me a bad evening. It

had a strange secret of fascination. You were caught in the current of the story and were simply swept along to the conclusion. The characters stood out sharp and clear, each with a decided individuality. The descriptions were brief and epigrammatic, but every one flashed its picture quickly and decisively into your mind. It was undeniably a very unusual piece of workmanship, and every page showed shrewd observation of men and things. The first thing I did not like was the pervasive spirit of cynicism. It gave a certain unpleasant hardness to the book. Then there was a sordidness of soul which appeared again and again. You were introduced to a company of people who thought more about what things cost than what they were worth. But worst of all there was an unblushing appeal to the lower appetites which quite staggered me. Some of the scenes would have been terrible reading for a man's mother. It was difficult to believe that the sensitive, high-souled Max Newton could have written them. As I read the last chapter the little old lady came into my mind. What would she think of this sort of thing from one of her boys?

It was several years before I heard just what she did think, and the story of the memorable interview which put an end to Max Newton's career as a writer of questionable novels. He himself told me the story one night in a hotel in Philadelphia, and with his sense of the dramatic and his power of description he did full justice to the interview, even if its point was all against him.

It seems that about eight months after the publication of The Seven Stars, Max came home from New York for a brief visit. Of course he could not go back without looking in on the little old lady, though he confessed to me that he had a vague dread of meeting her. Timidity was not one of Max Newton's outstanding characteristics, however, and he was able usually to carry off the most difficult situations.

He found Mrs. Morley seated in the library, surrounded by her books, and making so charming a figure in her delicate gown, with her cameo face, that an involuntary expression of admiration escaped him. Her greeting was cordiality itself, and soon they were chatting amiably together with the kind of mental sword play which was a delight to them both.

Perhaps the interview was not going to be so difficult after all.

At length the little old lady said, "I've read The Seven Stars, Max."

"And you haven't anything very good to say of the author, I dare say?" replied that same author, deciding to take the situation by the horns.

"The author successfully kept all the good things about him out of the book," declared the little old lady, looking him steadily in the eye.

"O, come now, Mrs. Morley," said Max; "of course I knew you wouldn't like it. But don't rub it in too hard. You know times have changed and we've got to treat things in an out-and-out way to get hold of the public."

"Still it's rather disconcerting to pick up a book by a man one supposed to be a man with brains and to find he is only a man with a stomach."

An angry flush came over Max Newton's face. This was not exactly the sort of attack he had expected. He quickly controlled himself, however, as he replied with a delicate chivalry of tone which had done execution in many a trying situation.

"My dear friend, no one appreciates or honors the white temple where you dwell and the noble guardian of the shrine more than I. And I can quite understand how my story must seem to you a wind from an evil world. But it is a real world. And did not you yourself tell me that I must live?"

Two sparks came quickly into the little old lady's eyes. That they were danger signals Max knew well and he waited anxiously for her next word. She looked him over steadily and then said in a tone whose quiet had a curious intensity in it:

"I will grant that no one could deny that this book comes out of your life."

The flush of anger came again to his face and this time his emotions were too much for him. He did not have entire self-command as he replied.

"Is it fair for you in your cloistered life to pronounce judgment? What do you know of the life a man meets in the rush and movement of the world? I will grant that you are an expert in the Essays of Elia, but this is a different matter."

No one of her boys had ever gone so far before. But the little old lady was not one

who would resent an affront when that resentment might rob her of an opportunity to save a life from folly and failure. With her characteristic mastery of mood, she suddenly relieved the atmosphere of tension as she said with an amused smile, "Why, my dear boy, I knew the French realism thoroughly before you were born!"

Max knew her campaign tactics. He was fighting a hard battle, and he refused to accept her change of mood. Only his gift of audacity could possibly save him. He resolved to risk everything on that.

"Yes," he said. "You read the French realism of a generation ago, but did you understand it?"

The little old lady sat very still. He watched her face with a curious fascination. He had never seen the face which looked at him in a moment, a strange, disillusioned face with heartbreak in it, and yet in the eyes a stern, strong hope. He was quite silent until she spoke.

"Max," she said, "many years ago my own brother came home from Paris to die. He had lived in the Latin Quarter for several years. He had tried to believe that a

man is a body and that it is an impertinence to talk of the rights of the soul. He had lived out his theory with entire consistency. I cared for him during the last two weeks of his life. Most of the time he was delirious. He said to me the things he had said to young men in Paris and the things which they had said to him. He repeated the words he had spoken to women in Paris. He uttered aloud the thoughts which had been his in his most completely abandoned moods. I was saved from nothing. He made me share his worst experiences. And I could not help but understand."

The room was very quiet for several moments. Something clutched hard at the throat of Max Newton. His face was very white and his tone a little unsteady when he said at last: "Can you forgive me, Mrs. Morley? I did not know that I was opening an old wound."

There was a stern and terrible indignation in her reply.

"That is not the important matter, Max. It is not a question of old wounds. It is the new wounds. Your book, so full of fascination and allurement, is in the hands of hundreds

of thousands of young men to-day. What have you to say to their sisters? Can you see their eyes, bright with the light of the judgment of the pure womanhood of the world?"

Again there was that tense, hard silence. Then the little old lady went on: "There are two voices in the heart of every man. One is the voice of a beast. One is the voice of a man's soul. Your book gives a new compulsion to the voice of the beast."

Max was staring blankly before him, and suddenly lowered his head and held it tightly in his hands. As he sat so the little old lady spoke again: "The day my brother died he had a completely rational hour. He looked at me with trouble in his eyes. 'Have I been saying things to you, Sis?' he asked. There was only one reply that I could make, and the trouble in his eyes deepened. He felt feebly for my hand. 'I don't mean them any more,' he said, and summoning all his strength he added, 'I mean just the other thing!' "

Still Max sat silent with his head between his hands. The little old lady put her own hand gently on his head.

"That's what I want from you, Max," she said. "I want you to mean the other thing."

Max sprang to his feet and seized Mrs. Morley's hand. "I don't deserve to call you my friend," he said, huskily. "But I do thank you for your surgery. The operation has been successful, and," here he spoke with a low intensity in which his whole personality seemed expressed, "the patient must survive to mean the other thing."

. . . . . .

With his characteristic abandon in talking with intimate friends, Max had told me the whole story as if some third person had been the man involved. At its close we sat in the kind of friendly quiet in which words are not needed. The atmosphere seemed somehow charged by the presence of that quiet, powerful personality we all loved so well.

"Say, old chap," said Max at last, "do you think I can ever make her glad and proud and contented with me? Anyhow I'm going to try."

He did try and how well he succeeded the public which so eagerly devours his books may tell.

V

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

THE room was very quiet. In fact, it was altogether too quiet. Mrs. Morley awoke with a start. She had a distinct feeling that there had just been a noise. Now the stillness was complete. It had an arresting quality as if by some strange process stillness had become a sort of noise. The little old lady lay tense with a curious expectancy. The quiet seemed like a falling object which in a little while must strike something and break into bits. For a few long minutes nothing happened. Perhaps, after all, it was only a dream which had left her with such a strange and alert awareness. She resolved to compose her mind and quiet her nerves and go to sleep. But just in the instant of making this decision she heard a furtive movement like the creak of a shoe. Deftly moving her hand she pressed the button near her pillow. A flood of light flashed through the room, and there by her dresser stood the burglar.

Even as his eyes were becoming accustomed to the sudden glow of light Mrs. Morley formed a distinct picture of the man who had broken into her room. He was a little below medium height, with a lithe, muscular body. His face, with its fiercely flashing eyes, was rather terrifying, but Mrs. Morley quickly reflected that startled by the sudden invasion of light he was probably for the moment more fearful than she. He made a quick movement toward a rear trousers pocket, doubtless for his gun. Then Mrs. Morley spoke.

"Pray, don't be alarmed," she said. "I have no intention of hurting you. You can probably do your work better with the light turned on. It must be awkward moving about in the dark."

The startled look vanished from the face of the burglar, and a slow grin came in its place. "Well, you are a dead game sport," he said. "But perhaps I love darkness rather than light."

If there had been any invisible tremor about Mrs. Morley's person, the burglar's grin reassured her, and she flashed back:

"That must be because your deeds are evil."

The burglar was surveying her with a very direct and all-inclusive scrutiny.

"You put over that matter of getting on the light pretty smoothly," he said at length in a low voice which had a compelling quality in it. "Now, I wonder if you have any other little buttons about that bed."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Morley at once. "There's another right beside it, with which I could have summoned the butler if I had cared to do it."

"And why didn't you?" asked the man, watching the door as well as the little old lady while he spoke. A look as of a wild creature poised to spring came into his face.

"I didn't," said the little old lady, "because I wanted to talk to you. I can talk to my butler any day, but a burglar is a luxury I can't often afford."

The man chuckled, and an almost boyish smile came over his face.

"Do you know, I like you?" he said, looking full into her eyes with a light in his own full of something more like merry comradeship than the glitter in an eye set for some criminal act.

Mrs. Morley had been thinking quickly while this conversation was going on. Now she said, "If you don't mind will you hand me my dressing gown from the wardrobe there, and then if

you'll go to the window for a few minutes I'll be ready to receive you in a more formal way."

The burglar bent a very searching gaze upon her.

"By Jove!" he said, "I am going to trust you. I believe you're the sort that plays fair."

He carried out her directions and stood for awhile in the large bay window looking out into the night.

When he turned, Mrs. Morley sat comfortably in an easy chair, the rich folds of the beautiful dressing gown falling about her. It was a wonderful face upon which he looked, with that cameolike charm to which we have all long ago surrendered.

"Won't you have a chair?" said Mrs. Morley, hospitably.

The burglar hesitated.

"You needn't have a moment's hesitation or solicitude," said the little old lady. "I'm a great night owl and noises never alarm the servants. Besides, none of them are near enough to hear our voices."

The burglar sat down with an odd sense that the little old lady was in command of the situation. He did not know the saying frequently

let fall from the laughing lips of her friends that to obey her once was to be her slave always.

Now it was Mrs. Morley's turn to look searchingly into the face of the burglar. It was a very human face with attractive lines, and the quiet glow of the eyes was something to remember.

Mrs. Morley moved forward a little, and with some subtle gesture and quick look of understanding, created an atmosphere of friendly confidence.

"Now, won't you just tell me why you do it?" she said.

"You mean?" inquired the man with some hesitation.

"Breaking into houses, and taking that face and those eyes where they haven't any right to be," said Mrs. Morley, suddenly.

A hard look came over the man's countenance.

"That's just the difficulty," he said in a cold, bitter voice. "This face and these eyes haven't a right anywhere." He paused for a moment, then he continued.

"I've had no end of handicaps. It's been a hard scrap ever since I was a little kid. I had to steal to keep alive then. And I've been stealing ever since. O, yes"— this in response

to a look which quickly came into Mrs. Morley's eyes and which he as quickly comprehended. "I've been in prison more than once. It's a great school, I can tell you. I thought I was a tough little kid when I went to prison, but I was a white little angel beside the hard nut who came out. I did a lot of reading in prison. That was worth something. But everything else was the kind of thing I can't talk about with you. There was some things I wouldn't do. I wouldn't use dope, and I wouldn't do the things that take all the ginger and nerve out of a man. So I've a sound body. But I'm a bad lot. You really oughtn't to feel safe sitting there talking to me."

There was an odd hard irony in his voice as he uttered these last words.

"But that's just it," Mrs. Morley broke in. "I do feel safe. And you give me the right to feel safe. And with all the bitter things you say about yourself I know that you are only telling the worst part of the truth. The other part, the best part, you can't hide, even if you try. Why don't you give the other side a chance to be all there is of you?"

Mrs. Morley always said more with her tones than with her words, and her tone had a sort of

a sturdy fine appeal in it as she spoke. The burglar looked over at her as if fascinated by her words. Then the hard look came back again, and he answered:

"You're fine, sure thing," and there was a sincere heartiness in his first words, "but you just don't know. Here you are with all these fine things and all this fine life. What do you know about wanting things for years, all the while knowing you can't have them? What do you know about feeling that right in front of you society bangs every door you want to enter?"

There was a sort of cool triumph in his words, as if he knew that she could have no possible answer. Little did he know of the power of strategy possessed by this tiny gentlewoman, or of the lengths to which she would go for the sake of bringing help.

She was silent for a moment. The burglar moved uneasily. "I'm not knocking you, you know. You're all right. But you just can't get at what I've been up against."

When Mrs. Morley raised her head, he sat back silent. Something about her bearing made him listen with eagerness as she spoke.

"You are entirely mistaken," she said. "I

know all about it. All my life I've wanted something I couldn't have. All my life I have wanted to go through doors which wouldn't open."

She leaned forward as she continued: "I'm going to tell you something I've never told anybody before."

He waited in tense expectancy until she spoke. There was something half-defiant in her voice as she said: "When I was a little girl I wanted to be a boy. And when I grew up I wanted to be a man."

In sheer reaction the burglar forgot his surroundings and burst out laughing.

"Is that all?" he asked.

Something in the little old lady's face stopped another outburst of laughter.

"Is that all?" she repeated in fine scorn. "You simply do not know what I mean. Can you imagine what it is to have the spirit and temperament of a boy and have to live the life of a girl? Can you imagine what it is to have the spirit and temper of a man and have to live the life of a woman? When little girls were doing dainty and charming things in the house I wanted to be doing hard, rugged, vigorous things out of doors. When I grew up I had a

man's plans and a man's ideals and I had to live the life of a woman. I've literally given up all the things I wanted most. Society closed with a bang the doors I wanted to enter."

A gleam of comprehension had come into the eyes of the burglar.

"You mean that every bit of you got mad at the things you had to do?"

The little old lady smiled grimly.

"That's about the way it's been," she said.

"Then you do know how I feel," he admitted, surveying her curiously, and then he went on: "But what did you do about it? You don't look all cut up, and—" he hesitated as he felt for words, and then twisting his sentence he concluded, "Why, you look as if you liked it."

A sudden light seemed to suffuse the little old lady's face.

"You are right again," she said, looking at him, expectantly.

"But—but—I don't understand," he said, completely at a loss.

"You don't understand how I could hate a thing and then learn to like it?" she inquired.

He nodded his head without speaking.

"Well, you see," said Mrs. Morley, "I got it into my head that it was easier to con-

quer myself than to fight nature. I made up my mind that it was better to accept my limitations than to beat my head against a hard stone wall. I made up my mind that I wouldn't break in to get things I couldn't have worthily. I wouldn't try to steal a man's life. I'd live a woman's life. It was my hardest battle. It took years, and the fight left scars. But I found out the secret at last."

"And what was it?" said the burglar, his face was alive with interest.

"That it's only the things you get honestly you can ever enjoy."

The burglar sat silent awhile. Then he spoke. And his words proved how worthy he was of the little old lady's confidence. There was a great admiration in his voice as he said: "And that's how you became you. It wasn't the wealth and the opportunities, but the fight and the winning out."

He turned away for a moment. Then he went on: "By Jove, I believe you're right." Then he looked right into her eyes as he said: "Do you know, I think I'll have to strike another trail?"

VI

THE ECLIPSE OF ELIZABETH DALRYMPLE

"CAN you tell me why Elizabeth Dalrymple is like the New York Sun?" asked Jack Meredith, suddenly.

A dozen of the old crowd sat in the comfortable living room at Clara Barton's. Elizabeth Dalrymple had just made one of her scintillating remarks, which seemed to burst in the air and drop live sparks all around.

"That's easy," said Joe Lovell; "she's like the metropolitan luminary because she gives light for all."

"And why is Jack Meredith like the Times?" said Elizabeth, quickly. She always professed a tremendous admiration for the way in which Jack could gossip cleverly, without any malice or sting in his speech.

We were all silent for awhile, and then Elizabeth brought out her answer triumphantly: "Because he gives you all the news that's fit to print."

"That's one on you, Jack," said Joe Lovell, slapping his chum on the back. "Come, now, what have you to say for yourself?"

"All that I know of a certain star." Jack began to quote, and with a poignancy which surprised us all he rounded out:

> "They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
> What matter to me if their star is a world?
> Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it."

He was looking straight at Elizabeth with a curious light in his eye. "I think I like Browning's star better than—the New York Sun," he said with a significance very thinly veiled. "Some luminaries are wonderfully generous, and very indiscriminating with their radiance."

Elizabeth was always able to defend herself, and she responded with some bit of brilliant chatter. But from that night I knew where Jack's heart was to be found, and I had some unexpressed convictions about Elizabeth. A telltale gleam had flashed in her eye while Jack was quoting the exquisite bit of Browning's verse.

Altogether I was not surprised when a few months later the engagement of Jack and Elizabeth was announced, and I was ready

for Jack's hearty, irresistible rush upon me the day when he said: "Old chap, will you be an usher at my wedding? Of course Joe Lovell is to be best man."

That wedding was a memorable affair—all condensed sunshine and the fine gayety of friendships tried and true. We were like one great family, and the marriage of Jack and Elizabeth was an experience to all of us. It seemed as if every one of the crowd caught some of the joy of it. What we all felt was summed up by Clara Barton after the ceremony: "Now the two are one," she said. "And may they be like Shelley's skylark, which,

> 'Singing ever soars,
> And soaring ever singest.' "

After the moment's pause, when we were all feeling our deep good wishes, Joe Lovell, who never failed to bring us back to the C major, said: "The English skylark's all right no doubt. But I hope Jack and Elizabeth won't have to soar out of sight before they drop their liquid notes."

I went East that fall, and it so happened that I did not see any of the old crowd for over two years. Then one Saturday found

me in Philadelphia with a business engagement there on Monday. I did not want to spend the Sunday in the Quaker City, and took a train for Beach Haven, running the risk of being unable to find hotel accommodations in the seaside resort.

When I reached the hotel one of the first things which met my eyes was the laughing face of Clara Barton. She was the center of a merry group, and had not noticed my approach.

I was fortunate enough to secure a room, and in a few minutes appeared on the large piazza looking for Clara. She was sitting alone now, the rest of the party having gone out on the beach. Hearty greetings were soon over and we were back in the city we both loved, among familiar scenes and with old friends.

My questions came thick and fast, and the answers had the spice and vivacity which had given Clara her individual place in the group of boys and girls who had grown up together.

When I mentioned Elizabeth Dalrymple—so her name slipped from my lips—Clara's face clouded.

"You haven't heard about Elizabeth?" she asked, in a troubled voice. "Not a word,"

I replied, anxiously. "Surely nothing unpleasant has happened to Elizabeth and Jack."

Clara rose from her chair.

"Come out on the beach," she said, "and I'll tell you all about it."

A wonderful Saturday afternoon it was, with a bracing breeze blowing in from the sea, the waves breaking merrily on the beach, and the sun smiling down benevolently on it all. As we walked along Clara began.

"You know how we all felt. Nothing could be quite so fine and beautiful as the life Jack and Elizabeth would live together. Well, it was very fine indeed. But there was something finer. That was when little Jack came. It took the three to make that home complete. I used to feel that I had never known Elizabeth before. Motherhood seemed to have glorified her. And Jack hovered about like the priest at a sacred shrine, full of a perpetual awe and solemn joy. It was all human enough too, with no end of mirth and frolic. But the fun was always subsiding into a great seriousness. I remember finding them in the garden one summer evening. Little Jack was sleeping in his mother's arms, and Elizabeth's eyes were glowing with the most wonderful

light. Jack sat by her side, and his face had all the richness of peace and joy and perfect content and a great purpose to make life mean much for the two by his side."

Clara paused, and stood looking out over the sea. A ship was slowly moving along near the horizon, and her eyes were fastened upon it. But I knew that she was not thinking of the ship. A suggestion of chill had crept into the air as the afternoon turned into evening. She drew more closely about her a light wrap she was carrying and continued:

"Then came little Jack's sickness and death. It was like a flash out of the clearest and brightest sort of sky. There was no warning. Just one of the many baby illnesses, the sudden development of alarming symptoms and the ebbing of the tide of life. The blow quite crushed Elizabeth. She seemed to have no power to rally from it. All her gayety of spirit has vanished. All the old flashes of brilliancy are gone. She moves mechanically through the day's duties. No one can rouse her. It gives me a dreadful feeling to be with her. One doesn't feel that it is Elizabeth. Just a pale ghost of her it seems. When you look in her eyes there is no light at all."

"And what about Jack?" I asked.

"Jack is like a soldier on a hard campaign. He has been a wonder to us all. Gentle and understanding, and always seeking to anticipate Elizabeth's slightest wish—only she doesn't seem to have any wishes at all. But it is wearing on Jack. The strain must be terrible, and he's getting thinner all the while. But he never utters a word of complaint. And he has made us all feel that no words of sympathy will be welcome."

We talked of many things that evening and the next day. But as I took the train back to Philadelphia the one thing which remained with me was the picture of the desolate home of Jack and Elizabeth. It seemed unbelievable and impossible.

Three months later I was again in the city of a thousand memories. The first afternoon I met Jack Meredith. His face was glowing with health and energy and good spirits.

"You have an engagement for dinner tonight," he declared. "Elizabeth will never forgive me if I go home without you."

My protests were unavailing, and off I was carried by Jack in his old impetuous way. As we sat at the finely appointed table in

Jack's charming home that night I knew that something had happened since I had seen Clara Barton. Elizabeth presided with the zest and the grace and genial gayety one would have expected in the old days. There was a new seriousness to her face when it was in repose, and there was a new depth about her speech. There seemed a wonderful group of undertones following even her lightest and most merry words. But in bearing and expression she was a woman who was finding life full and rich and glad. If there was any trace of a baptism of fire through which Jack and Elizabeth had passed, it was only in the brighter shining of the pure gold of their devotion.

It was by degrees and in fragments that I learned the whole story. Some things were told me by Jack, some things by the little old lady, and some by Elizabeth herself. At last I put my mosaic together, and understood how Elizabeth had been saved from the darkness which threatened to become permanent.

One day Dr. Palmer, the wise and capable old family physician, had drawn Jack aside.

"My boy," he said, "you are carrying a

heavy enough load now without my adding to its weight. But you are a brave man, and there's something I must tell you."

Jack stood very still, his face set in lines of strong and stern self-control. The doctor went on:

"Elizabeth is very delicately organized, as you know. And all the intricate mechanism of her life has been at a terrible tension for weeks. She cannot endure the strain much longer."

"You mean—?" inquired Jack, reaching out deliberately for hard concrete facts, whatever they might be.

"I mean," said Dr. Palmer, slowly, "that Elizabeth cannot go on in this way a month longer and retain her reason. We must rouse her somehow and bring this unnatural nervous tension to an end."

With a haggard face and uncertain steps Jack sought out the little old lady, and told her all that the physician had said. Somehow there was tonic in her very presence, and he went away vaguely encouraged and hopeful.

That night Elizabeth received a note from Mrs. Morley which was in effect a summons. We were all accustomed to obey the little old

lady when she chose to command, and the next morning Elizabeth set out for the home of her friend.

It was a wan and weary young woman, with a face cold and almost expressionless and a strange mechanical movement as she walked, who was ushered into Mrs. Morley's presence that day. The little old lady quietly motioned Elizabeth to a chair, quite omitting her usual tender and loving greeting. Absorbed as she was with grief, Elizabeth noticed the omission and looked up a little surprised.

There was no particular friendliness in Mrs. Morley's eyes. She looked inquiringly at Elizabeth and said, "Have you decided where you will live after the funeral?"

Elizabeth shuddered.

"The funeral? What do you mean?" she asked.

The little old lady made no reply for a moment, and her visitor looked at her with increasing agitation. It was the first interest in a present conversation which she had shown for weeks. When she was sure that she had Elizabeth's entire attention, Mrs. Morley spoke again.

"Of course you must know that you are

killing Jack. I have been merely wondering what you are going to do when he is gone."

"Jack—gone!" cried Elizabeth in alarm.

"Just that," said the little old lady, remorselessly. "You see you have lost just a child. Jack has lost both a wife and a child, and the blow is too much for him."

Elizabeth's face was no more white and cold. It was flushed and full of hot, intense feeling.

"Jack," she repeated, half mechanically, "has lost both a wife and a child." Suddenly she burst into tears.

"Poor Jack," she sobbed, "I didn't realize that I was making it so hard for him."

Mrs. Morley was beside her now, with her understanding hand gently pressing Elizabeth's hot fingers, which opened and closed convulsively. For a little while the younger woman wept quietly—her first tears since little Jack had died—then she looked up at Mrs. Morley.

"I have been very selfish," she said. "But I wonder if you can understand, you who have your grown-up sons and daughters all about you."

Mrs. Morley looked right into her eyes. "You never knew, Elizabeth," she inquired,

"that I lost my first boy when he was five years old?"

Elizabeth looked up in astonishment. "Is it possible," she said at length, "that you have gone through it all? That you have felt your heartstrings drawn until it has seemed they would break with pain, as you have watched the one little life dearer than all the world to you slip away into the great silence from which never a cry comes back?"

Mrs. Morley was quick to note that, suffering intensely as she was, Elizabeth's mind had begun to move in the old way, thinking by means of vivid images. She knew that her treatment was proving effective.

"Yes," she said, allowing memory to bring up again the old terrible grief, "I met all that."

"And did you conquer it at once, and go right on brave and strong?" asked Elizabeth, piteously.

"Far from that," replied Mrs. Morley. "I was lost in my grief just as you have been lost in yours. It seemed as if I could get no help. Each morning I faced a bleeding wound. So it was until the first Easter after my little boy's going. I attended the service that morning,

not expecting to find any help. There was a processional, led by a group of choir boys. Each carried a bunch of Easter lilies, and as they came they sang rapturously, 'He is risen! He is risen!' For a moment I had a vision of my own boy grown a little older and marching in with such a group of choir boys while his voice joined in the jubilant song. Then, suddenly, it came to me that where the living Christ was there my little lad was too. I seemed to look across a wide field of exquisite, fragrant lilies, and then to see the great, gentle divine form of the risen Christ, and beside him, plucking the lilies, was the form of my little son. And it came to me in the strangest, most wonderful way, that I could trust my boy with him."

The little old lady was silent for a moment. Then she said: "It was often hard after that, but it was never impossible."

Elizabeth's tears fell fast, while her friend softly stroked her brow. The long-closed gates of emotion were open, and nature was having its way.

Mrs. Morley allowed her to give full expression to the feelings which surged within. Then something about the pressure of her hand re-

called Elizabeth to self-control. It was amazing how many things the little old lady could say without words.

Elizabeth yielded to some gentle ministrations of her friend. Then she spoke very softly: "How much you have done for me this morning, Mrs. Morley! You have shown me myself. You have shown me my husband. And you have shown me the child among the Easter lilies. Now I must go home and get ready for Jack."

VII

SHE DID NOT UNDERSTAND

THE room was bare and cheerless and ugly enough. Upon an ill-kept bed in one corner lay what seemed more like a bundle of rags than a human being. The little old lady had opened the door gently and now moved very quietly toward the bed.

"You'll have to be mighty careful," she had been warned by the woman on the floor below. "She don't want anybody around and she sure does talk something awful."

A ray of light from the late afternoon sun had managed to penetrate the forlorn room. It fell upon the little old lady now as if trying to find one place in the room where there was a touch of beauty and charm. Mrs. Morley wore a very quiet simple dress, but the cameo beauty of her face and the quiet distinction of her bearing nothing could hide. She held some fragrant red roses in her hand.

The figure on the bed moved restlessly, and

a pair of deep, heavy, hopeless eyes was fixed on Mrs. Morley.

"You get out of here. I don't want to hear you talk. I've got along without any help from your kind up till now, and I'll do without you to the finish. None of your fishy, sniveling talk for me."

She was about to turn her face to the wall again, when Mrs. Morley spoke quietly.

"Yes, I think you can do without me, but I don't think I can get along without you. I came because of something you can do for me."

There was a curious sound between a snort and a hard laugh in the bed.

"Something I can do for you! Don't you see I'm all in? 'Doc' Gilden says in a day or so I'll hand in my checks. I'm through. I've struck bottom. Go away, won't you, and let me alone?"

Mrs Morley was standing nearer to the bed now.

"I understand," she said in that voice whose subtle sympathy had won so many. "You see I'm almost through too."

The woman on the bed made a movement in which surprise and anger seemed mingled. She

looked steadily at the little old lady for a moment. Then she said:

"I reckon you're right. You've come to the last act, sure thing. But that don't make you understand. You've lived to be an old woman. You have money and friends. You've held the right cards all through the game. Why, do you know I'm only thirty, and life has been hitting me in the face ever since I've been a little girl. You'll die one of these days, and you have had everything you could want. I'll likely die tonight, and I've had nothing. You can't talk to me. Now, won't you cut out this talk and beat it?"

She softened a little and added as if the words were drawn from her half against her will: "I guess you mean all right. But you and I can't get together. Why, you wouldn't speak to me if I weren't dying!"

"But you see I can't go until you tell me that you forgive me!"

The woman on the bed was silent from sheer astonishment. After a few minutes she managed to speak.

"Forgive you? Are you out of your head, woman? Why I never saw you in all my life."

"No, that's just it," replied Mrs. Morley.

"Dr. Gilden tells me that you were born in this part of the city and have lived here all your life. And he says that everything has been against you from the start. None of us have found you and tried to help. I'm only one, of course, but I must bear my share of blame. So I've come to ask you to forgive me."

There was a longer silence now, while the woman peered steadily and with a deep-searching scrutiny into Mrs. Morley's face. The little old lady had taken the one chair in the room, quite as if in response to a cordial invitation, and she returned the woman's gaze. There was none of the condescending pity of a conscious superiority in her eyes. They were just warm and human and eager and they seemed to be asking a favor, to be seeking for some great gift. The sick woman breathed a sigh, which was partly a groan.

"I reckon it's pretty late for me to hear that sort of thing now," she said, "but I see you're white and square. You mean what you say. You're all right. I'd take a favor from a woman like you, sure thing." She hesitated as her eyes fell on the roses. "I'll take one of them if you'll give it to me."

Mrs. Morley selected one particularly beau-

tiful rose and placed it in the woman's hand. In a moment she had put the others in a cracked glass she found in a little cupboard. She put the roses where they were easily seen from the bed.

Then she stood beside the sick woman and said with a curious grief-stricken sternness in her voice: "We have broken your life, and I don't wonder that you are not wanting to have us come to see what we have done." Not many people had heard Mrs. Morley use a tone in which there was so much bitterness. The woman's eyes never left her face. A curious light of satisfaction had come into her own. It was quickly succeeded by one of anxiety.

"Well, don't you mind. You didn't do it at any rate. You'd have put me in a garden of roses, I guess. Say, I wish I'd known you twelve years ago."

The little old lady went on almost as if she had not heard the interruption.

"We build up a big, prosperous, successful city. We grow a breed of men strong in everything but self-control. And we live our little complacent lives, never putting forth a hand. We are afraid to face the facts. We worship ignorance. And all the while"—she came back

from thinking out loud to speaking to the woman on the bed again—"all the while girls with shining eyes and merry faces and eager hearts, are trying to find love and loyalty and are finding"—she hesitated and did not complete the sentence. A fierce energy seemed to possess her. "I hate it."

A strange thing had happened on the bed.

Tears had filled the eyes of the woman in rags. She put forth her hand.

"Talk that way some more," she said. "I like to hear it. When I talked the worst I wanted to say that and didn't know how."

Mrs. Morley held the sick woman's hand firmly, but was quite silent, a silence somehow filled with a sympathy which drew the two closer and closer together. The woman on the bed spoke again.

"Do you know I hate churches? They seem like a wall you can never climb over. When you came in I thought maybe you came from a church."

Then she went on:

"You wouldn't think it now, but I was a pretty enough girl. All keen on getting everything there was. And pretty soon I found there was mightly little for me. Then there was the

big chance at last, I thought. He didn't play fair. And I cared. And I thought I was in the game for keeps. And after that blew up, I didn't care much. So it's gone, and I reckon I'd never have talked about it if you hadn't come in here. It does make it easier to find one woman you can talk to—one woman like you, I mean."

The hand of the little old lady was gently laid on her brow, and a strange contortion, half smile, half sob, passed over the woman's face.

"Why, this is like having a friend," she said. She lay thinking quietly as if trying to solve some riddle. Then she said: "But why do you do it? Why are you like this?" Her eyes were fastened on Mrs. Morley's face.

The little old lady spoke quietly.

"I have a Friend who loves the people who haven't had a fair chance, and breaks his heart over them when they suffer and go wrong."

"I'd like to know him," said the woman on the bed. "I'd like to see a man like that."

"He died a good while ago," said Mrs. Morley. "But he isn't dead after all, and—" she hesitated, but with a quality of courage characteristic of her, she continued, "They were singing about him in church this morning."

"O, you mean religion," said the woman, disappointedly. "I've known some religious people"—this in a hard sardonic tone. "But did religion make you feel the way you do? If it did there's something about it I've never caught on to."

The little old lady held a glass of water to the lips of the sick woman, as if anticipating her desire. Then she sat down again and began to talk. It was the Master as she had known him in a whole life's vicissitudes of whom she spoke. All her power of vivid understanding description was brought to bear on making it all real to the woman beside her.

The figure on the bed lay quite still. At first there was a tolerant but incredulous look on her face. She liked this woman and she would listen to anything she had to say. But incredulity was replaced by interest. Interest became more intense. She seemed looking over the shoulder of the woman at the well as she talked with Jesus. She felt all the passion of his purity. She felt all the tenderness of his love. With a power to make it real in a simple human way the little old lady lifted the curtain on the scene where

Jesus wrote on the ground. She brought the sick woman into the presence of the one who washed the feet of Jesus and wiped them with her hair. Then in a voice very low but very distinct she spoke of the cross, and in her words there was a deep and rich gladness even as there was heartbreak. The cross seemed an open door of hope to every Magdalene.

The woman on the bed was weeping quietly.

"Why, I never understood," she murmured, and she kept repeating, "I never understood."

The little old lady was not done yet. Now she spoke of Easter morning, of the women who met the One who was stronger than death, of his shining victory and far-flung power. All the passion of her own faith, which had come forth gladly triumphant through many ways of tears and bitter struggle, was in her words.

The sick woman seemed looking far beyond the room.

"Why, it's too good to be true," she murmured, strangely enough in a tone of acceptance rather than one of rejection. Then she had her moment of leaping faith. Her eyes were full of a great luster as she said:

"Why! He's come right here from the cross to take away my twelve bad years."

. . . . . .

The afternoon wore into the evening. There was stillness in the shabby room. But it was forlorn no longer. When late that evening Mrs. Morley's friends came for her, they found her sitting quietly beside a still form, with a face which in the moonlight seemed shining with God's gift of peace. The woman's fingers held tightly a great red rose.

VIII

BLEED AWHILE; THEN FIGHT AGAIN

THE big blue limousine turned about swiftly and came up the driveway and into the porte-cochere. A well-built athletic figure, with an appearance of easy distinction and a stride which suggested command of himself and of others, moved swiftly across the piazza. The butler appeared almost at once in response to the ringing of the bell, and just behind him stood Mrs. Morley with outstretched hands. Her eyes were shining with welcome as she said:

"Come in, Charley. Do you know I was just thinking of you. I was reading an account of William T. Harris's application of Hegel's philosophy to American life and I fell to wondering what you would think of it."

She led the way to the library and pointed to the chair where an eager young man had often sat while he poured out the story of his hopes and dreams, his ideas and ideals.

All this was long before he became the

governor of the State, but she greeted him in the old way. There had always been a mental tussle the moment Charles Bowman appeared, and with her usual skill she began just where they had left off long before. She knew how many people had ceased to touch the life of the man and could only think of the governor.

Charles Bowman leaned back comfortably. His eyes moved about the room drinking in all the old familiar sights. Then they rested on the little old lady, a delicate pink in her cheek, her whole bearing alive with interest in him and the talk they were going to have.

No one appreciated Charles Bowman's gift of charm, or the quick power of his speech, at times like the crack of a rifle, more than she. Now there was a wealth of tribute in the way in which he sat looking at her.

"You are just the same, I see," he began, "you little lady of perpetual youth. That's why I came. I wanted to find somebody who is young." There was a lurking seriousness under his light tone, which Mrs. Morley was quick to perceive, though she made no sign.

The governor picked up the book which

was lying open on the table. "So you're going in for Hegel as diluted by William T. Harris. I thought it would be Bergson, or Eucken."

Mrs. Morley smiled with a certain gay mischief in her eye.

"Do you know, I like Bergson's illustrations so well that I forget his thought, and I like Eucken's feelings about life so well that I forget his ideas. So I'm going away from danger by reading after a man who is a thinker with no secrets of verbal magic, and no wells of intuition so deep that you forget everything else in their contemplation."

Charles Bowman was looking very steadily at the little old lady. He knew her tactics well, and more than most of her friends he could tell what she was about. It came to him now that she was deliberately testing his interests in fields away from politics to see if he had kept his mind alive, and to see all sorts of other things which would become evident if he talked about these matters. He had said long ago, "Mrs. Morley gets you talking on one subject and then listens to what you don't say on another." At the time it was regarded as a particularly pen-

etrating description of one of the methods of the little old lady.

Still holding the book in his hand, the governor said, musingly, "To take the thesis and the antithesis and to combine them in a larger synthesis was a marvelous formula to Hegel and his followers, wasn't it? All unconsciously it's the politician's formula. And it works. But sometimes you have to pay cash down."

There was a grim irony in the last words, and he waited for Mrs. Morley to reply. She was a master of effective silences, and she simply sat waiting.

Charles Bowman's finely chiseled face had hard lines upon it as he looked toward her. At length he burst out with his old boyish impetuosity: "Mrs. Morley, we haven't had a talk for a long time. But, of course, you know all about my career in this State. I learned my trade. I mastered it. I found the way to make everything count. I capitalized all my energy and brains and everything else there was of me. But it was fair, clean work. I have been after a better State, and I've never gotten in the way of my ideals of what the State ought to be—not if I knew it."

Mrs. Morley's hand moved with an eager

gesture of assent. "I've known all about it," she said, "and I could put it far more strongly. It's been a great fight. A new spirit is in the State because of the way in which you have lived and worked." She seemed to gather energy in an individual way she had when she wanted to make a sentence a personal gift, and then she said, "I've been proud—very proud—to watch it all."

She gave such words so carefully, and with such a sense of responsibility in uttering them, that they always meant much to her friends. Charles Bowman's eyes gleamed with some deep response of gratitude.

"That pays in full for some very bad hours," he said.

In a moment the hard, troubled look came into his face again.

"They've got me fastened up so tightly that I can't move now, Mrs. Morley. I can see through the whole thing. But I can't do anything about it. They've paid a price I won't pay, and the State is theirs."

Mrs. Morley sat listening now with an intent sympathy which made it very easy to talk. Governor Bowman went on:

"You know the group of men who have

been in control in this State so long. They are as able and as crooked a group as any commonwealth in the country had known for many a year. Really, they have been playing with me. They assented to my election in order to make a pretense of reform and go on with their own plans all the while. Well, they haven't found me the figurehead they expected. There's been some good fighting, and I've won some victories, but for all that I've not seriously interfered with their deepest plans. I haven't been able to touch them at the places where they care most. Now they plan to reelect me—to seem to accept my leadership—and then to go on in a more subtly effective way to debauch the State."

He sat still after he had spoken these words.

Then he said with hard emphasis: "I can't do what I want to do. I won't be a tool. So I'm not going to be a candidate."

Mrs. Morley took this announcement without so much as a gesture or a movement of an eye. If Governor Bowman looked for an exclamation of deprecation and disappointment, it did not come. The little old lady filled the silence with a quality of expectancy

seeming to ask for more, seeming to suggest that, of course, he had more important reasons for his decision.

"That's all there is," he cried, "and isn't that enough? I can't allow myself to be the mere instrument of that gang. I can't let them use me as an anæsthetic to put the public to sleep while they bleed the State."

Mrs. Morley rose and walked across the room. She carefully drew a book from one of the cases, turned to a certain page and handed the book to Charles Bowman, pointing to a marked passage. His eyes followed her finger and he read from what he recognized at once as an old English ballad:

> I'll lie down and bleed a while,
> And then I'll rise and fight again.

He looked up at Mrs. Morley. There was fire in her eyes. A sudden gleam came into his own.

"Do you know, I believe you would," he said, admiringly.

"And I know that you must," she flashed back immediately.

She sat down opposite him. There was a kind of poise to her body which suggested a soldier ready for a battle. He waited ex-

pectantly to hear what she would say. Her first word almost brought him to his feet.

"Of course you know, Charley, that you haven't begun to fight—" He started to interrupt her, but a gesture of command held him back. "I know all the things you would say. I've followed your career intimately. I could tell you the very months of strain which have worn your body. I could tell you the hours which have been almost a torture. It has all been fine and brave. From many a man it would be superb, but it isn't from you."

She sat for a moment scrutinizing him, as if to see if she dared to say all that was in her mind.

"Go on," he said with a half-ironic gesture; "do your worst."

She rose and stood before him. She knew it would not be easy to move him. She felt that it was a critical moment.

"I know you, Charles Bowman," she said, "and I know that you've never put one third of your full power into this battle. You've measured yourself by other men, and not by your own capacity. If you ever use all your power, you can master this State. You can overwhelm completely the corrupt forces. You can shake

the very foundations on which the worst things rest, and bring them down. Under your leadership the people can remake the State."

Once again he would have spoken. Again she moved imperiously on: "You have the ear of the State in a completer way than you know. You have capacities for organization you have never used. There are deep, unsounded resources of power in your life. Are you going to desert the State? Are you going to be a quitter?"

The last word, so utterly unexpected from this little lady of rare and delicate culture, came like an explosion.

The governor rose and began walking back and forth in the room. There was another hour of talk. It was a battle royal, and sometimes it seemed doubtful as to which way the victory would lie. With amazing strategy and alertness Mrs. Morley pressed every advantage. The whole impact of her power of brain and personality was put into the struggle.

When at length Charles Bowman stepped into the limousine he called back to the little old lady:

"Your Hegelian dialect is too much for me. So I'll rise and fight some more."

IX

WHEN SKIES WERE GRAY

THE sun was shining brightly. There was an enticing fragrance of flowers in the air. June was doing its best to live up to James Russell Lowell's praise. The world seemed thrilling with beautiful secrets it was ready to tell anybody who would come away and listen. A bird was singing a song sweet enough to express the rapture of a whole happy city.

Mrs. Morley walked wearily toward the window. Her eyes were heavy and her heart was heavier. There was a sort of pallor on her face which accentuated her age.

The sprightly, brilliant, vivacious woman about whom her friends clustered in admiration seemed to have vanished, and there was left behind a wan shadow of a woman, without vital energy, and with only a great emptiness in her eyes.

The last ten days had made a demand upon her strength and sympathy which it would have been difficult for anyone to meet, and this fragile woman had drawn too heavily upon the

bank of her vitality. The inevitable reaction had come and she had slipped off to her little cottage in the country to meet it alone.

Now she stood watching the bird making such mad melody on the branch of a tree outside. She caught herself wondering how it could possibly sing. Then she shook her head gravely as she said to herself: "This is going to be a bad battle. If only one could meet a day like this by itself. The trouble is they attach all the other bad days of one's life to them, and what a dull, doleful, dismal train of days goes crawling down the track!"

The bird on the outside had reached a marvelous crescendo of final jubilation. There seemed something almost malignant in the way in which he flaunted his joy in the little old lady's face. She turned away and sat dully in a chair in the middle of the room. For a while she was perfectly quiet. Then she rose abruptly.

"This will never do," she said. "It seems as if every ugly experience I've ever had is ready to come and leer at me out of the past." Hastily adjusting a hat and a light wrap, she walked out into the country road. She felt like a slave pursued by hounds baying on her track. Old sorrows, old disappointments, old disillusion-

ments came madly after her. Weary of body, tired in brain, devitalized by too much effort, she seemed powerless to resist.

Then from all the other figures of melancholy one emerged and became dominant in her thought. Every life has some deepest pang, far more poignant than all others. In the most helpless hour it makes itself felt with completest power. With a sort of brutal strength the sorrow within all sorrows came swinging into the little old lady's mind, with all its cruel, remorseless egotism possessing her soul.

There was a look in her face now which no friend had ever been allowed to see there. A deep inarticulate misery looked out from her eyes. With all the wonder of the summer about her, the sky of her own life was completely overcast. A gray mist had settled upon her soul.

With a certain bitter accent she found herself quoting the lines of Alfred Noyes:

"Mist in the valley, mist no less
Within my groping mind!
The stile swam out: a wilderness
Rolled round it, gray and blind.
A yard in front, a yard behind,
So strait my world was grown,
I stooped to win once more some kind
Glimmer of twig or stone.

"A universe of lifeless gray
Oppressed me overhead.
Below, a yard of clinging clay
With rotting foliage red
Glimmered. The stillness of the dead,
Hark!—was it broken now
By the slow drip of tears that bled
From hidden heart or bough.

"Mist in the valley, mist no less
That muffled every cry
Across the soul's gray wilderness
Where faith lay down to die;
Buried beyond all hope was I,
Hope had no meaning there:
A yard above my head the sky
Could only mock at prayer."

The little old lady stood quite still.

"No," she said, decidedly, "I won't stop with that. I'll go on to the great hope." With set determination she repeated the other lines swelling with the wonder "of wheeling suns and stars" and "the gleaming city" with all its gift of strength. She said the words, but her soul remained unkindled. The sorrow within the sorrow was gnawing away at her heart.

Some distance ahead the little white country church appeared as she followed a turn in the road. With quick decision she bent her steps

toward that white symbol of the presence of the helping God.

"I can't find God in my heart this morning," she was saying, piteously. "Perhaps I'll find him there."

In a few minutes she was seated among the folk of that rural community, a little company of them gathered for the Sunday morning worship.

The organ creaked sadly. The singing was poor enough that day. There was no delicate beauty of music, or noble quality of ritual to come like a balm to a tired and tortured heart.

A very young man was in the pulpit. He was obviously nervous. Once the hymnal fell from his hand. When he came to pray, however, there was a genuineness about the words he sent forth on the quest for the ear of God which set something fluttering in the little old lady's heart.

Then there came the sermon. It wasn't exactly a sermon. It was a very boyish piece of work as far as structure and arrangement were concerned. Mrs. Morley never noticed that. What she did notice was that soon the young man forgot his nervousness. He lost himself because he found the thought of his

message all engrossing. His words were alive. It was not mental power. It was moral power, and it was spiritual power. He was a vigorous young chap, and as he talked you knew that he had known the battle in the wilderness with wild beasts. He had been torn with conflicting desires, and in his darkest hour, the strong, pure Christ had come to him with the secret of triumph. The wonder of it all gleamed in his eyes. It gave a telling power to his gestures. It rang in his tones. The little church was transfigured to him because within its walls were men and women to whom all life could be made over by the secret which was singing itself so gloriously in his own heart.

Somewhere along in the sermon that supreme thing happened which is the highest reward of true preaching. The preacher's form disappeared from the soul's vision—and that other form of the Great Healer and Helper stood before the people with outstretched, welcoming arms.

The little old lady closed her eyes suddenly, while hot tears moved down her cheeks. Very softly she was saying to herself, "I come, I come," using the words of the old hymn which has carried so many toward the waiting Christ.

And then the ever old, ever new miracle was wrought. That spiritual sacrament within the soul was made real. And the sorrow within the sorrow was all changed as the light of God fell upon it. Where there had been restlessness there was peace. Where there had been rebellion there was the joyous quiet of a great submission. And green pastures and still waters were all about in the midst of the summer day.

"I think I'll go where the birds are singing now," said the little old lady to herself as she walked away from the church. "I know why they sing."

. . . . . .

When Mrs. Morley went back to the city in a few days, her friends met the usual understanding vital woman on whom they had depended so long.

"You are always joyously alive," said one of them, enviously.

The little old lady only smiled a gentle serious smile.

X

BURNING BUT NOT CONSUMED

"HOW do you do it?" asked Colonel Arnold. There was amusement. There was cynicism. There was admiration in his voice. He was sitting beside Mrs. Morley at dinner, and his finely chiseled face, his carefully trimmed gray mustache, and his clean-cut military figure made him a person sure to attract one's eye and then to hold it. Colonel Arnold had been living in Europe for a dozen years. He had the easy and assured bearing of a man who had mingled with people of significance in many lands. A good many years before the night of which we are writing a friend had stopped admiringly before him, at a brilliant function in a certain European capital. He looked at the fine, soldierly form, he observed every detail of the perfectly groomed figure before him, and then he said, "Colonel Arnold, I believe you were born in an evening suit."

There was only one thing which was dis-

appointing about this well-made gentleman to the acute observer. You did not feel satisfied with his eyes. They were keen and clear and cold. They could flash with amazing flame. They could hold you with hard and powerful and unescapable scrutiny, but they had no deep wells of peace in them, and there were no fountains of dreams playing in their far depths. Matthew Arnold could not have written of him, "The soul still looked out of his eyes."

To-night the colonel was busy picking up the threads of an old friendship. He had known Mrs. Morley very well indeed dim long years ago. She could always bring a thrill then. He was surprised to find that blasé and world weary as he was she could bring a thrill still.

He was talking now, not waiting for her to answer his question, or, rather, explaining the question before he allowed her to answer it.

"I'm not surprised at your brilliancy," he said. "I knew that had grown with the years. One night in Paris after an hour with a woman whose words flashed like diamonds and whose personality glowed with majestic power, I

walked away with Senator Paxton. You met him in Washington a decade ago. He was praising the rare and radiant woman with whom we had been talking. 'But then,' he said, suddenly, 'you ought to see Mrs. Morley and you ought to hear her. She doesn't need Paris for a background. She would turn a log cabin into a salon.' So it has happened again and again. People turned up in London and in Rome who knew you, and it was always the same story."

Colonel Arnold paused a moment. The little old lady had a curious secret of listening to such things—and she had found it necessary to listen to a good many of them in her lifetime—as if they were approaches to something more important and less personal which she wanted very much to hear. "She is one of the few women who can listen to a compliment with perfect good taste," a friend once said of her. Colonel Arnold quietly gazed at Mrs. Morley with an odd sense of how completely satisfying she was. Then he went on. "Do you know, I was almost afraid to see you. I am always discovering the flaw in vases other people admire. But this time the vase has gone beyond expectations.

And it isn't the vase which surprises me. It's the flowers growing in it, and the fragrance." He leaned toward Mrs. Morley with an engaging grace.

"Dear little lady," he cried, "flowers belong to the springtime. You and I belong to the autumn. I have no flowers in my garden any longer. How do you keep them blooming in yours?"

Under all his well-bred gallantry there was something real, something restless and eager, something which he wanted to know.

Just at this moment the hostess gave the signal. The dinner was over and the guests arose.

Colonel Arnold bent toward Mrs. Morley. "I want to talk," he said, imperiously, almost like a boy. "Come with me into the garden where the other flowers are."

"If you have no flowers in your garden, you know how to turn words into flowers," the little old lady flashed at him. Then with gay mischief in her eyes, "But I suppose a great traveler like you doesn't need new flowers always. Clever phrases will bloom over again just as often as you wish."

Colonel Arnold chuckled. "It's new wine

in new wineskins to-night. It's fresh from Olympus and only the gods have touched it before."

They were out in the garden now with the quiet night beauty all around them. Mrs. Morley had thrown a cloak of some soft and exquisite material about her. She looked up at Colonel Arnold with a keen friendly scrutiny in her eye. Then she spoke.

"Prometheus, you remember, stole fire from heaven. You have only stolen wine. Perhaps that's why your interest lags before the end of the play."

The man beside the little old lady made a quick gesture. Then he waited as if he expected her to say more. Mrs. Morley's silences were always full of meaning. She allowed this one to become very pregnant before she went on:

"Do you remember Mrs. Browning's song about the great god Pan and the reeds by the river? If the reeds are people, you have to be careful. When a man plays at being the great god Pan the music has a way of leaving his soul after he has destroyed a good many reeds by the river."

Colonel Arnold seemed to stiffen for a mo-

ment. Then with his world-seasoned gift he quickly accepted his companion's mood.

"And was it to be a supplement to Elizabeth Barrett's great god Pan that Robert Browning wrote the poem with the phrase, 'It's an awkward thing to play with souls'?" he asked.

"You know all the phrases," said Mrs. Morley quickly. "What a pity that words have holes in them and let the meaning slip through them and escape!"

The easy urbanity of Colonel Arnold slipped from him now. He bent over Mrs. Morley with a new seriousness in his voice.

"Do you think so badly of me as that?" he asked.

The moon was shining into Mrs. Morley's face. Her statuesque beauty and the fine lines of her features were singularly impressive in that garden full of mysterious shadows and silences and the fragrance of rare flowers. She stood looking into her companion's eyes and somehow as she stood the years seemed to slip from her.

"By Jove," cried the colonel, "if you and I were thirty years younger, I know one flower I'd try to have in my garden."

Mrs. Morley was still looking at him with quiet intentness.

"Yes," she replied, "but you wouldn't be contented with less than a collection."

He winced a little at that.

Something still and cold seemed to come into Mrs. Morley's face.

"Do you know," she said, "if Cleopatra had been a man I think she would have been like you."

The man at her side had an angry light in his eyes. He steadied his voice, however, as he answered:

"Your surgery is rather remorseless, isn't it? When one touches this rose one must watch for the sharp thorns."

He knew that he was unfair and that he had betrayed his anger.

Mrs. Morley touched his arm quietly. There was a wealth of warm friendliness in her voice now:

"One must care a great deal in order to have the right to wound. And I do care a great deal for the man you lost somewhere in the heat of life. Won't you help me to find him?"

Colonel Arnold lifted his head with a sudden imperious friendliness.

"Tell me about yourself. Perhaps if I understand why you please me so much I will understand why I please you so little."

Mrs. Morley's silence had something evasive and impalpable in it. Her companion led her into a little summer house and when they were seated comfortably he spoke. "It isn't hard for me to see, old friend, that you've kept life's fires burning brightly. The wonder still gleams in your eyes and warmth is all about you. Once again I ask, How have you done it? I am old and the fires have gone out. I know how to play the game of make-believe. But really it's winter and there's no place where the hearth fires glow."

It seemed a long while that they were silent. It was a time full of memories and all the subtle undertones of thought. Mrs. Morley looked up at last.

"It's queer that books are alive, isn't it?" she asked.

The colonel knew her well enough to be patient while she guided him on the trail of her thought.

"You mean?" he questioned.

"That dead people live in so many books

and that one book has enough life in it to raise the dead."

She turned to him impulsively now, with an almost girlish energy.

"I'm going to tell you. One book gave me the secret. Or, rather, one person in one book. I didn't know before that you could have fire without having conflagration. Then I learned that a life as well as a bush may be burning without being consumed."

"I'm afraid this is a bit too mystical for me," replied the colonel.

"No, no, you are just the man who can understand. You thought you'd lose the fire of life unless you lived the life you've lived. And if you'd known it one big vital book would have told you how to have perpetual fire and never a conflagration. You didn't need to burn up so many things—and then be cold at last."

A deep frown was on the colonel's face. "Then tell me," he flashed out suddenly, "why good people are so commonplace." Mrs. Morley laughed at that.

"O, they're not," she said. "At least not because they're good. You would never have been commonplace even had you chosen to

be on the side of the angels. It's too bad you didn't because"—she waited a moment and then said, quietly, "The angels have the secret of perpetual fire."

Once again there was a long silence. Then Colonel Arnold looked at her with a frank openness in his eyes.

"I think I understand you," he began. "I understand what you have said. And more than that, I understand what you haven't said. You have tried to tell me that however successful a man's career if he plays the devil the good things are burned up in his life. And after the fire there are the ashes. There is the winter's cold. No flowers and no warmth. That's the price a man pays—even when he smiles at gay dinner parties, the icy fingers are gripping at his soul."

There was another silence. Then Colonel Arnold arose.

"You're quite right, old friend," he said. "But I can't roll back the fifty years. And there are some faces looking at me out of the past which tell me it is too late to try your book of the fiery secret. There would be a leer on some of them if I tried the other trail now."

He had never spoken so frankly before. Mrs. Morley rose and stood beside him. There was a quiet compulsion about her voice when she spoke. "Of course it would take a very brave man, and a very sincere man, and a man with enough youth in his heart to conquer the hard pride of age, and enough repentance to be willing to be hurt"—she broke off here and did not finish her sentence.

Abruptly the colonel walked away from the summer house. She waited quietly while he stood where the light of the night fell upon him. When he came back it was with hesitating steps.

"I wonder," he began, "I wonder—"

Mrs. Morley interrupted him.

"My friend," she said, "personality never grows old. It is not in the realm of the body, but the realm of the personal life that these battles are fought and won."

He seemed to seize something in the words. He repeated to himself, "Personality never grows old." Then he heard Mrs. Morley repeating:

> "Age is opportunity no less than youth itself,
> Though in another dress.
> And as the evening shadows fade away,
> The sky is bright with stars invisible by day."

With his usual courtly grace Colonel Arnold led Mrs. Morley back to the gay group in the spacious mansion where they were guests. With characteristic skill he took his place in the sparkling talk in a house famous as a meeting place of men and women who used words like bright swords. If you had watched him closely you would have seen a new light in his eye. It was Mrs. Morley who was unusually silent the remainder of the evening. It is a sobering thing to watch the birth of a soul.

XI

AT THE POLO GROUNDS

THE car moved very smoothly over the asphalt of Fifth Avenue. Mrs. Morley leaned back contentedly against the cushions and smiled whimsically.

"When I get tired of America I come to New York," she said, with a little gleam of mischief in her eye.

One of the two ladies seated with her in the machine looked up in surprise.

"But—Mrs. Morley," she said with a certain gentle, well-bred hesitation which somehow expressed a great deal of quiet insistence, "don't you know this is America?"

Mrs. Maitland, at whose home Mrs. Morley was to visit, turned laughingly to her companion who had just spoken.

"Now, don't try to convince Mrs. Morley," she said. "She is a confirmed Middle Westerner. You have to get on the other side of the Alleghenies to begin to breathe American air to her taste. And when you prove she is wrong, she

comes back at you with a clever paradox which makes you feel uncertain yourself. She's a dangerous little lady."

Mrs. Morley was sensing the vivid splendid life on Fifth Avenue this fine early autumn afternoon. There was a touch of sharp tonic in the air, and the very gleam of the sun seemed made of a sort of military vigor, as well as heat and light.

"I like it," said the little old lady. "It isn't America. It isn't Europe. It's a world all its own. Fifth Avenue is like a steel engraving. It's made by a very fine process. It's a splendid bit of art. But it isn't quite life."

Once again Miss Needleton, who had first answered Mrs. Morley, spoke up.

"I should be inclined to put it just the other way. I should be inclined to ask if anything else is life."

The little old lady smiled indulgently. "An etching seems more desirable than anything a cinematograph throws on the screen, doesn't it? But, after all, the moving picture may be nearer the reality of things."

Mrs. Maitland turned half impatiently.

"Our Tom would like to hear you say that. Nothing compels the attention of his sixteen

years except moving pictures and baseball. He's somewhat of a problem to us. And his restlessness sometimes makes him just a little difficult. When he isn't restless, he's rather rude and noisy. He doesn't seem to fit quite into our scheme of things."

The little old lady looked at her hostess keenly. Marion Maitland had always seemed to her to have more brilliancy than human sympathy. Marion herself knew that she touched only one side of Mrs. Morley's life.

"We have a friendship based on epigrams," she had said once, years ago.

Questions about this beautiful and commanding woman had been moving in the little old lady's mind. What sort of a wife was she? What sort of a mother was she? This was the first visit Mrs. Morley had paid to Marion Maitland since the latter's marriage eighteen years ago.

The machine stopped easily, and the three women soon found themselves in a home where nothing struck the eye with disagreeable obviousness, but everything seemed so absolutely to belong in its place that you did not even have to see it. The whole atmosphere was curiously restful.

A sudden shout seemed to crash with unusual loudness across the well-bred silence of the house as a boyish voice cried out: "The Giants have won, mother; and the next game of the World's Series is to be played in New York."

A boy, rather loosely hung together, but with a good pair of eyes, and a very mobile, expressive face came down the stairs.

Mrs. Maitland introduced her son to Mrs. Morley in the midst of a rebuke to the son.

"Tom, you don't talk; you explode. Really, we can get along without explosions in this house. And you know I loathe baseball. Mrs. Morley, this is my son, Tom, who only reads one page of the newspapers—the page I never read at all."

Tom held his ground, though it was evident that he was embarrassed and disappointed. Something in his face seemed to say that he had been disappointed a great many times, and yet kept hoping.

Mrs. Morley looked right into his eyes. No boy had ever resisted that, and in a moment Tom had capitulated. He stood under a window beside the little old lady. Somehow he seemed to stand straighter. The adolescent angles seemed rounding a little into the firmer

and finer lines of later years as he eagerly answered the questions Mrs. Morley asked about the day's game.

Mrs. Maitland watched the two, a touch of amusement and a hint of irritation on her face. That the most brilliant woman she knew, whose ripe culture even Marion Maitland envied, should show interest in baseball, amused her. That Mrs. Morley instantly aroused and attracted her son in a way she herself had never done vaguely displeased her.

"There, there, Tom," she said. "Mrs. Morley is tired. We must let her go to her room now. Perhaps she'll talk to you about the Giants later, and, if she wants to go, we'll send you two to the game to-morrow."

There was the tiniest edge of irony in this sentence.

"Indeed I would like to go," Mrs. Morley broke in at once. "Tom and I will go together —that is, if tickets can be procured at so late a time."

If Tom had any lurking hesitation in his complete surrender to Mrs. Morley, her knowledge of the demand for tickets at a World's Series cast it away.

"O, father will find a way," he cried. "He can

get anything he wants"; and he was in danger of shouting again when a glimpse of his mother's face caused the shout to perish unborn.

That night at dinner it seemed to Marion Maitland that Mrs. Morley surpassed herself. Every resource of the little old lady was brought to bear on making the table talk as full of distinction as in some old-world center of the give-and-take of flashing ideas.

How wonderfully Mrs. Morley could listen! Edgar Maitland, at whose right she sat, felt her kindling influence, and talked as Marion was proud to hear him talk.

Then, as if by some subtle telepathy, Mrs. Morley detected the moment when other guests were possessed of some well-turned phrase, or was looking toward her hostess just when Marion was ready with some bit of analysis or comment or suggestion glowing with the color of her own bright magnetic personality.

All the people at the table seemed to be at their best. They talked of books without seeming bookish. They talked of art without the self-consciousness which sometimes turns what ought to be a spontaneous conversation into a stilted discussion.

It was as if a touch of the old Greek spirit

had made beauty a veritable part of the living experience of these New Yorkers. Marion Maitland felt that she had never had a more successful dinner, and in her heart of hearts she knew that she owed it to Mrs. Morley.

The next afternoon a certain box located at the best vantage point in the Polo Grounds contained a sixteen-year-old boy whose eyes were fairly dancing with excitement, and a little old lady whose age we have no right to surmise. She seemed as young as the boy beside her, as she let the spirit of the thousands of people all around play right through her own.

No one ever knew with what Herculean effort Edgar Maitland justified his son's declaration that he could get anything he wanted. Even a name well known on Wall Street did not seem as magical as usual when its magic must get two seats in a box for a World's Series game, on the morning when that game was to be played. But somehow the impossible must have been accomplished, for there sat Tom and Mrs. Morley.

The shouting multitude was like a tonic to the little old lady. She kept Tom talking, telling of the season's record, of the strong points of the Giants and the weakness of their op-

ponents. And all the while she was getting deeper and deeper into the real life of the boy.

The game began, and all conversation ceased. How quiet all those thousands of people could be! Then, when an effective play was made, how the applause roared forth, like the discharge of artillery! Tom was alive to the finger tips. Nothing escaped him. He seemed to wind up with the pitchers and to bat with the batters. He took his own journey to first or second, or made the home plate amid the shouts of the spectators. He literally played the whole game. He was the two teams, the eighteen players made into one, as far as vital instant sympathy with the playing was concerned.

At the close of the ninth inning the score was two to two. The first half of the tenth left the situation unchanged.

Then came the moment to which fans have referred for many a year. The Giants were at the bat. A man whose reputation as a batter the whole baseball world knew waited for the ball to come over the plate. When it came he met it with such a blow as brought all the spectators in the grand stand and the bleachers to their feet. First was made safely, of course, then

second, then third—then home; and now all the stops were pulled out, as New York shouted a wild, riotous pæan of victory.

But something strange had happened. The umpire was giving his decision. There was a moment of tense and terrible silence. Then a whisper went through the crowd: the batter had not touched second base! In the excitement of his mad journey from base to base he had neglected to touch one little bag. So it was not a home run. The batter was out.

A deep, curious sigh from thousands of throats rose above the Polo Grounds. Then the crowd settled down quietly to watch the rest of the game.

The Giants seemed to have lost heart. The minutes passed, and when two men were struck out the tenth inning closed. Full of fiery energy the Giants' foes came to the bat, and when the game was over it was the visitors, and not the New Yorkers, who carried away victory and the pennant.

Mrs. Morley and Tom sat quietly in the box, as the people moved away. He had been carefully instructed not to take her out until the crowd had pretty well dispersed.

The boy was gloomy enough now. His idols

had fallen, right before his eyes. He looked at Mrs. Morley to see if she understood. He was quite satisfied with the eyes which met his own.

"Gee!" he said. "Think of winning a game and a series, and then losing like that."

His jaws set firmly as he said, "It's perfectly—" (he forgot Mrs. Morley for the moment) "it's perfectly rotten!"

Mrs. Morley was watching him closely.

"It's not enough to be a great batter, is it?" she said. "One has to remember to touch second base."

Something made Tom turn quickly. He felt at once that she meant more than she was saying.

"That's true, all right," he said, "but what else do you mean?"

The little old lady's pleasure in his question was evident.

"Well, life's like that, isn't it?" she said. "It's a big thing to be a great batter, but such a lot of fellows forget to touch second base."

Tom was all soberness at once.

"You know, I've never thought of it that way," he said. "You mean life itself is a big game. Say, I'd like to be a pitcher, and pitch as Matty did to-day."

"I think you will some day," said Mrs.

Morley. "You'll come to the bat too. You'll have a fine batting arm. And after you hit the ball you must remember every bag."

Tom was very quiet. Then he turned to Mrs. Morley impulsively. "I wonder how a fellow could begin now," he said, bursting his sentence in his eagerness, "how he could begin now to be ready not to miss second base."

The little old lady's eyes were full of a sparkling challenge.

"Do you know, Tom," she said, "I have a notion to tell you! The winter work of the teams in the South isn't a grand stand performance, you know. It's just getting ready for the games later."

Tom was looking eagerly into her face.

"O, that's it?" he said. "I'm not useless now, after all, while I'm only a boy. I'm just in the South getting ready for the season. That makes a lot of difference. Why, it makes everything better."

There was a little choke in Mrs. Morley's throat as she watched Tom's hunger to get hold of something which would give him a sense that his boyish life had value.

But he quickly pursued his questions.

"What are some of the things a fellow ought to do in the South?"

The challenging, comradely, demanding sparkle was in Mrs. Morley's eye again.

"Well, if you want the kind of directions a coach in life would give—I suppose a boy who has enough self-control not to shout in the house, and remembers the things his mother wants him to do, and learns to be interested in the things she likes—I should think that kind of fellow would never miss second base."

Tom looked away for several minutes. Then he looked fearlessly and honestly into Mrs. Morley's eyes. Indeed, there was a twinkle in his own.

"Gee, but you did put that over," he chuckled. Then his face became very serious. "All right, Mrs. Morley," he said, "I'll do it."

. . . . . .

This was really all that happened, except that from Mrs. Morley's visit Marion Maitland seemed to take a new interest in her son, challenged perhaps by his evident devotion to the little old lady. And Tom responded in a way which completely surprised his mother. There even came a day when they went to the Polo Grounds together.

XII

THE OTHER COUNTRY

THERE was autumn beauty everywhere. "The leaves on the trees make you think of a glorious sunset," Mrs. Morley had declared that morning as she drew back the curtains of the window and looked out on the masses of color in which the trees had clothed themselves. With wonderful angry beauty they were meeting the frosts and the chill. They would be defeated with colors flying.

Mrs. Morley was seated on the pleasant piazza in front of the cottage to which she had so often slipped away from the city to rest during the stress and strain of the life of many years.

Thomas Barton was sitting beside her; the Rev. Thomas Barton, S.T.B., to give him the benefit of his ecclesiastical title and his theological degree. He was young—"shamefully young," one of his friends in the East had said—and his closely knit, well-built

figure and clean-cut face were good to look upon.

Only five months before this autumn afternoon he had graduated from theological school —a famous institution of scholars and leaders —and he was having his first experience as a shepherd of souls.

"You don't know what it means to me to come here while you are out from the city," he was saying. "You care about the things I care about. You understand."

He hesitated a moment; then he said, "I can't get inside the people here—if there is any inside," he added, bitterly. "They don't know what I'm talking about when I preach. And I don't know what to talk to them about when I call."

He gave an impetuous shrug of his sturdy shoulders and a wry smile came over his face as he went on: "You remember that illustration I used last Sunday about the Apollo Belvedere. Well, one of the men fresh from the farm asked me afterward if that town wasn't in the State of Maine. Now what can you do with people like that?"

Mrs. Morley ignored his question, and asked another.

"Do you really know Mortimer Biglow?"

Mortimer Biglow was the saint and mystic of the countryside.

"O, yes, I know him," Thomas Barton replied. "He's good, surely. But—" there was a wealth of meaning in his hesitation.

A little light of mischief came into the little old lady's eye.

"Did you ever hear of the English lady," she asked, "who was talking of a pious man from her country home?

" 'O, we'll meet him in heaven,' she said, 'but we can't possibly know him in London!' "

"Now you're laughing at me," cried Thomas Barton, his face flushing a little. "But, after all, there's a pretty deep gulf fixed, and the people don't cross it, and I can't find the way over to them."

The two sat silent for a little while. Then Mrs. Morley looked quite into the young man's eyes.

"I suppose any culture is very provincial," she said, "which does not add to a man's human resourcefulness."

Thomas Barton made a gesture of protest, and was about to speak. But just then there was a click of the gate, and another young man entered.

"Good afternoon, Phil," said the young minister, indifferently. He was evidently less than pleased to have his conversation with Mrs. Morley interrupted. Philip Downs was about to turn away with a quick understanding of the situation. But Mrs. Morley had arisen, and stood before him with outstretched hand.

"Six whole days I have been in Mapleton," she said, "and this is the first time you have walked through my gate."

A quick glow came to the face of Philip Downs.

"You are an opportunity and a temptation," he said in a tone of friendly banter which caused the young minister to look up in surprise. "But the farm is a very jealous mistress, you know."

Mrs. Morley was sitting now between the two young men, each in one of the hospitable, friendly chairs of her piazza. For the moment she let the minister slip into the background, while she plied Philip Downs with questions about his reading and his work.

Thomas Barton listened in amazement. This young farmer, who had been repelled by some unconscious touch of condescension

in the minister, and had made himself unapproachable enough, was now showing himself to be a man of mental power, of individual opinion and a real gift of expression. Thomas Barton did not know that for years Mrs. Morley had been the guide, philosopher, and friend of Philip Downs, and that his mental life had expanded under her influence as a flower comes to fine bloom.

It was Philip who became conscious that the minister was being left out of the conversation—Mrs. Morley knew that she could trust him with that opportunity. And it was Philip who deftly included Thomas Barton in the talk, which soon had all the glow and interest of actually congenial minds playing about themes of mutual concern.

The two young men left the cottage together. When they were about to separate, Thomas Barton put out his hand impulsively; "I've never known you, Phil," he said. "I'm glad to have met you to-night—the real you." Then, with a little difficulty, he got out the rest of what he wanted to say. "I wish we might be friends."

"Sure thing," said Phil, heartily as he gripped the offered hand, "but let me tell

you, there are a lot of people around here better worth knowing than I." A genuine friendly concern had crept into his voice. "Try being a Columbus, Mr. Barton, and discover this part of America. It's a great country." Then he said "Good-night."

Mrs. Morley continued to sit quietly on the piazza of her cottage. She smiled in a gentle, understanding way as she thought of the two young men each having so much to give to the other. She was glad that she had been able to bring them together.

Then she turned her mind to other things.

Her family physician's face, with its grave, frank friendliness, was before her again. He had made a special call just before she had left the city. She had wondered a little at the quality of gentle admiration in all that he said. They were always great friends, but Dr. Newcombe was never a flatterer. When he rose to go he stood by her chair for a moment.

"I do not need to be evasive with you," he said; "you always look life straight in the eye."

Mrs. Morley had taken a moment to look out of the window. Then it was a clear,

steady gaze which met the physician's earnest look.

"Perhaps you have nothing to tell me," she said, quietly. "There are some things nature tells us—to keep physicians humble," she added with characteristic whimsical humor.

Dr. Newcombe smiled a little. Then he waited until Mrs. Morley asked, simply, "Can you tell me how long it will be?"

The physician spoke slowly. "I cannot be sure, of course. But I think it will come quickly, as it has done often with your mother's people. You have used all your vitality with such abandon that—to be frank, you are living now on your will rather than on your strength. When the time comes I do not think there will be much power of resistance—"

Mrs. Morley interrupted. "I see what you mean," she said. "It will be like the 'one-hoss shay'—everything giving out at once—and that is what I have always wanted."

Neither spoke for a while. Then Dr. Newcombe said: "Don't be alone for any long period. I was afraid you might do that in the country. Keep some one within calling distance all the while."

The words seemed to bring a new, sudden sense of realization to Mrs. Morley. The physician saw her hand close quickly. Then her eyes were full of light as she turned them upon him.

"Thank you, my good old friend," she said. Then she laid her hand gently upon his arm. "It has been good to be alive," she said, "so good—so good."

The physician marveled as he thought of many things locked among the professional secrets in his mind and heart. Then he remembered other things, and did not marvel.

But Mrs. Morley was still speaking. "I think the autumn has been best of all. Do you know, I have rather enjoyed being the 'last leaf upon the tree'!"

The two were standing now, and the physician murmured some scarcely articulate words of farewell. Mrs. Morley looked up quickly. "Do not fear for me," she said. "I shall be waiting."

All this passed through her mind—sitting now on the piazza of her summer cottage. Within she heard the sound of softly moving feet, as a well-trained servant moved about some household task. She looked out at the

Western hills with the rich colors of the leaves, and on at the sky radiant with the golden glow of the day's farewell.

Softly she repeated to herself the words from Hiawatha:

"And the evening sun descending
Set the clouds on fire with redness,
Burned the broad sky, like a prairie,
Left upon the level water
One long track and trail of splendor,
Down whose stream, as down a river,
Westward, westward Hiawatha
Sailed into the fiery sunset,
Sailed into the purple vapors,
Sailed into the dusk of evening.

"Thus departed Hiawatha,
Hiawatha the Beloved,
In the glory of the sunset,
In the purple mists of evening.
To the regions of the home-wind,
Of the Northwest wind, Keewaydin,
To the Islands of the Blessed,
To the kingdom of Ponemah,
To the land of the Hereafter!"

The little old lady sat very still.

"The land of the Hereafter," she repeated in a voice very low and quiet.

Suddenly out of the past there came with a sharp pang the sorrow within the sorrow.

But with it at once there was a quick, wonderful knowledge that it was a part of something larger, and that larger thing was all shining with noble joy. She seemed focusing her eyes to see some wonderful, unaccustomed thing.

At length she understood that the picture which was capturing her imagination—something more than a picture, she knew—was one great, strong Form bending under a heavy burden. It was a form she instinctively recognized.

"He has always carried my burdens," she breathed rather than spoke. Then the heavy burden strangely vanished. But the radiant strong Form remained, standing in the glory of the sunset and beckoning.

In that transfigured moment mysteries all seemed suddenly to be made clear. Vast vistas opened. The sunset became a sunrise. She was not at all bewildered or surprised. The one Face with its love and welcome filled all her thought. . . .

So they found her in the shadows after the sunset—very still and very small—with the light of the eternal morning upon her face.

Y0-DNL-184